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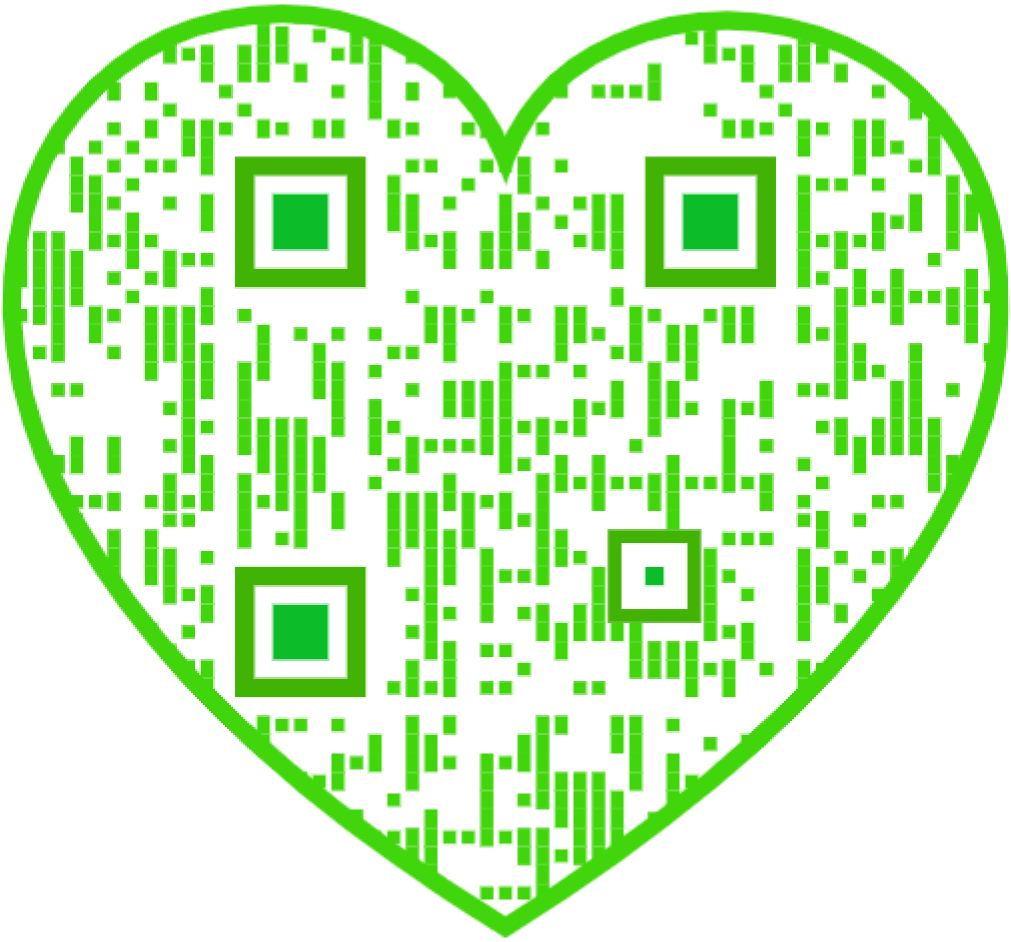

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DOUBLE ISSUE: 2025 PREVIEW & TOP 100 PROSPECTS

Baseball America

ROKI OF THE YEAR

ROKI SASAKI
RANKS AS BASEBALL'S
NO. 1 PROSPECT FOR THE
NO. 1 DODGERS

PLUS › TOP 20 ROOKIES › BREAKOUT PLAYERS › POWER RANKING ALL 30 MLB TEAMS › HOW THE MINORS ARE CHANGING

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MARCH/APRIL

Leading Off

MARCH/APRIL 2025
VOLUME 45, ISSUE 4

46

> *“Talent is beginning to coalesce in Washington.”*

THE NATIONALS’ CORE FOUR OF
JAMES WOOD, MACKENZIE GORE, CJ ABRAMS AND DYLAN CREWS

TOM DIPACE

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MARCH/ APRIL

Leading Off

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COVER PHOTO BY DAVID DUROCHIK/
DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

ON DECK FOR MAY: *We dig into a number of our favorite subjects and ask if we are living in the age of velocity, player development and disappearing offense at first base.*

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First Pitch

MAKING SENSE OF SOMETIMES DENSE ANALYTICS IN BASEBALL

ARMS ON THE FARM

Six pitchers rank among the top 10 overall prospects. Are we entering a new era of pitching dominance?

by MATT EDDY

Baseball America has ranked the Top 100 prospects in baseball for 36 seasons, and this year's edition is a notable one for pitchers.

Six pitchers rank among the top 10 overall prospects. This has happened just four times in 36 seasons.

Position prospects tend to be favored on prospect rankings. Not only do they carry less injury risk, but the most talented ones contribute both offensively and defensively to team success.

But this year, a combination of pitchers who are more talented than usual—and position players who are less bountiful than usual—created an environment for pitching prospects to stand tall among the Top 100.

Here are the four Top 100 Prospects classes to feature six pitchers ranked inside the top 10. Pitchers are listed with career Baseball-Reference WAR totals through 2024:

1992

1. Brien Taylor, LHP, Yankees (N/A)
2. Todd Van Poppel, RHP, Athletics (–0.3)
3. Roger Salkeld, RHP, Mariners (0.2)
5. Arthur Rhodes, LHP, Orioles (15.2)
9. Frankie Rodriguez, RHP, Red Sox (1.2)
10. Pedro Martinez, RHP, Dodgers (83.9)

2008

3. Joba Chamberlain, RHP, Yankees (7.6)
4. Clay Buchholz, RHP, Red Sox (16.8)
7. Clayton Kershaw, LHP, Dodgers (79.4)
8. Franklin Morales, LHP, Rockies (1.9)
9. Homer Bailey, RHP, Reds (6.2)
10. David Price, LHP, Rays (40.2)

2012

2. Matt Moore, LHP, Rays (8.4)
4. Yu Darvish, RHP, Rangers (33.1)
5. Julio Teheran, RHP, Braves (20.4)
8. Shelby Miller, RHP, Cardinals (8.9)
9. Trevor Bauer, RHP, D-backs (21.1)
10. Dylan Bundy, RHP, Orioles (7.5)

2025

1. Roki Sasaki, RHP, Dodgers
3. Jackson Jobe, RHP, Tigers
7. Bubba Chandler, RHP, Pirates
8. Chase Dollander, RHP, Rockies
9. Andrew Painter, RHP, Phillies
10. Noah Schultz, LHP, White Sox

Favoring pitchers at the top of the Top 100 has yielded high highs and low lows.

Pedro Martinez ranked No. 10 in 1992. Today, he is in the Hall of Fame. Clayton Kershaw will join him one day. He ranked No. 7 in 2008.

David Price (No. 10 in 2008) and Yu Darvish (No. 4 in 2012) had long, successful careers by any measure.

Arthur Rhodes was a dominant lefthanded reliever who pitched in 20 MLB seasons. He ranked No. 5 in 1992.

Even with those notable successes, a greater number of pitchers failed to live up to potential.

Injuries are always a factor—Brien Taylor tore his shoulder capsule in an offseason fight at the peak of prospect status and never reached MLB—but so, too, is the degree of difficulty inherent in becoming a trusted major league starting pitcher for multiple seasons.

Despite all the pitching plaudits, it is not a deep Top 100 Prospects pitching class overall. Only one time in 36 seasons have fewer pitchers ranked in the Top 100.

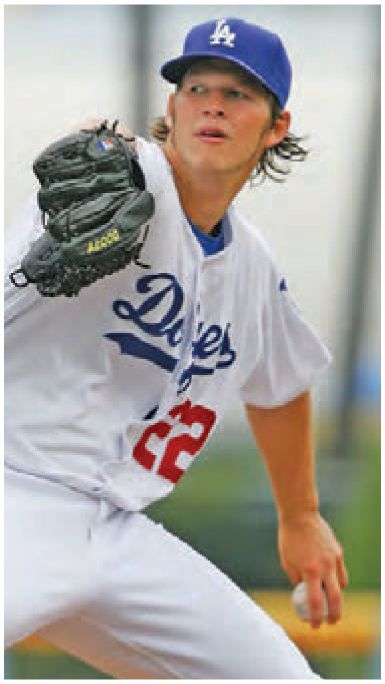
Six pitchers rank as top 10 overall prospects this year, but that surfeit of high-end arm talent does not extend beyond the top 10.

Just seven pitchers rank inside the top quartile this year. Just four previous Top 100s had fewer pitchers ranked inside the top 25.

A total of 14 pitchers rank in the top half of this year's Top 100. Only one previous edition had fewer pitchers in the top 50.

Overall, the total number of pitchers ranked in this year's Top 100 Prospects is 29. In only one season has that number been lower. In 2023, a total of 28 pitchers occupied spots on the Top 100.

Over the years, the median number of pitchers ranked inside the Top 100 is 43. This year's total of 29 pitching prospects ranked among the Top 100 prospects is 14 shy of the median value.



When it comes to pitching prospects, there is strength in numbers. The more arms that crowd the top of the Top 100, the more likely a breakthrough becomes. For example, both Clayton Kershaw and David Price ranked top 10 in 2008.

LISA BLUMENFELD/GETTY IMAGES (KERSHAW), J. MERIC/GETTY IMAGES (PRICE)

So while it's a good time for standout pitching prospects who project to pitch near the front of a big league rotation, it is not an especially bountiful time for pitching prospects overall.

Of course, the way BA has ranked pitchers has changed over time. We are far more sensitive to injury and flame-out risk today.

The way MLB teams deploy pitchers also has changed. They are also more sensitive to injury risk and ask less of pitchers individually, preferring to spread the same number of innings to a greater number of pitchers.

But once a decade, the pitching cream rises to the top of the Top 100 Prospects. ■

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EDITOR IN CHIEF J.J. Cooper @jjcoop36
EXECUTIVE EDITOR Matt Eddy @MattEddyBA
CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER Ben Badler @benbadler
VICE PRESIDENT, DESIGN & STRATEGY Seth Mates @SethMates
HEAD OF AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT Mark Chiarelli @Mark_Chiarelli
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EDITORIAL
SENIOR EDITOR Josh Norris @jnorris427
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PROSPECT WRITER Geoff Pontes @GeoffPontesBA
NATIONAL COLLEGE WRITER: Jacob Rudner @JacobRudner
STAFF WRITER: Jesús Cano @Jesus_Cano88
CONTENT PRODUCER Savannah McCann @savjaye
SENIOR DIGITAL EDITOR Daniel Malone
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MINOR LEAGUES josh.norris@baseballamerica.com
PROSPECTS geoff.pontes@baseballamerica.com
REPRINTS angela.lewis@baseballamerica.com
SUBSCRIPTIONS/CUSTOMER SERVICE customerservice@baseballamerica.com
WEBSITE mark.chiarelli@baseballamerica.com

CONTRIBUTORS
MIKE ASHMORE South Bound Brook, N.J.; **KYLE BANDUJO** San Antonio, Texas; **GABE BURNS** Atlanta Journal-Constitution; **SHI DAVIDI** Sportsnet Canada; **JACK ETKIN** Denver; **JAMES FEGAN** SoxMachine.com; **DERRICK GOOLD** St. Louis Post-Dispatch; **DOUG GRAY** RedsMinorLeaguers.com; **JIM INGRAHAM** Cleveland; **JESSICA KLEINSCHMIDT** Oakland; **STEVE KRONER** San Francisco Chronicle; **SHANE LANTZ** Seattle; **LACY LUSK** Washington, D.C.; **JON MEOLI** Baltimore; **PHIL MILLER** Minneapolis Star Tribune; **BILL MITCHELL** Tempe, Ariz.; **LOCHLAHN MARCH** Philadelphia Inquirer; **MEGHAN MONTEMURRO** Chicago Tribune; **ANTHONY MURPHY** Bucs On Deck; **JOSE DE JESUS ORTIZ** Our Esquina; **NICK PIECORO** Arizona Republic; **BILL PLUNKETT** Orange County (Calif.) Register; **TODD ROSIAK** Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; **JEFF SANDERS** San Diego Union-Tribune; **ALEX SPEIER** Boston Globe; **MARC TOPKIN** Tampa Bay Times; **PAUL TRAP** Moab, Utah; **WALTER VILLA** Miami; **EMILY WALDON** Grand Rapids, Mich.; **TAYLOR BLAKE WARD** Inland Empire, Calif; **JEFF WILSON** Texas Rangers Newsletter.

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From Phenom To The Farm

FORMER BALLPLAYERS REFLECT ON PRO SUCCESS AND FAILURE

PRESSURE IS A PRIVILEGE

Drew Storen spent his entire eight-year MLB career fighting for saves

by KYLE BANDUJO

Drew Storen has trotted out to the mound in the ninth inning, tabbed as his team's closer, in many big situations.

He pitched in huge games during his college career at Stanford, including in the 2008 College World Series. Storen saved games in the minor leagues, in the big leagues and in the MLB postseason.

Knowing you're going to be the guy on the hill finishing things out in the ninth comes with pressure, but according to Storen, closing also had an unlikely perk.

"It is almost easier at times to close, because you know it's on the hitter to be the hero," Storen said. "As long as you don't make an egregious mistake, you're going to be OK."

Even as a freshman at Stanford, Storen was the guy to shut it down in the back of the Cardinal bullpen. During his two years in Palo Alto, he worked as much as a fireman as a traditional closer. He parlayed success in college into being drafted by the Nationals 10th overall in 2009.

No 10th overall pick has entered a system with less fanfare than Storen, who despite signing for $1.6 million and making it to Double-A during his draft year, didn't get nearly the press of the Nationals' top pick, Stephen Strasburg.

Strasburg got the headlines, but Storen beat him to the big leagues, debuting on May 17, 2010, less than a year after he got drafted.

In 2011, Storen took over as the Nationals' closer. It was the role he coveted, the role he'd occupied at Stanford, and the role he'd been drafted to eventually fill.

But it was also a role he'd spend much of his career fighting for in Washington.

During the six seasons Storen spent in D.C., the team acquired plethora of talented relievers with closer pedigrees, including Tyler Clippard, Rafael Soriano, Brad Lidge and Jonathan Papelbon.

Storen's 2011 wound up being the year he racked up a career-best 43 saves. He spent much of the rest of his tenure battling for a set role in the bullpen, which admittedly caused frustration.

"The game was so different then," Storen said. "You weren't getting paid for holds. You were getting paid for saves. It was tough."

JOHN GRIESHOP/MLB VIA GETTY IMAGES

Drafted 10th overall in 2009, Drew Storen reached Washington less than a year later. He saved 99 big league games, most of them for the Nationals.

Things all came together for Storen in 2014. He bounced back from a tough year prior to turn in a career-best 1.12 ERA for the National League East-champion Nationals, in large part because of a strong back end of the bullpen.

Storen was traded to the Blue Jays following the 2015 season. Then an ill-timed Tommy John surgery in 2017 left him a free agent with a rehabbing elbow.

Following a short stint in the Royals system during the 2019 season, he chose to retire, but he didn't waste time to begin chasing another dream.

Storen helped found Field Of Dreams Whiskey almost immediately after throwing his final pitch, bringing his love of baseball and a great idea to tie-in the movie of the same name to a new passion project, trading the job title of "closer" for "founder." ■

LISTEN NOW!

Scan the QR code to listen to Drew Storen on the "From Phenom To The Farm" podcast

Trap Toon *by* PAUL TRAP

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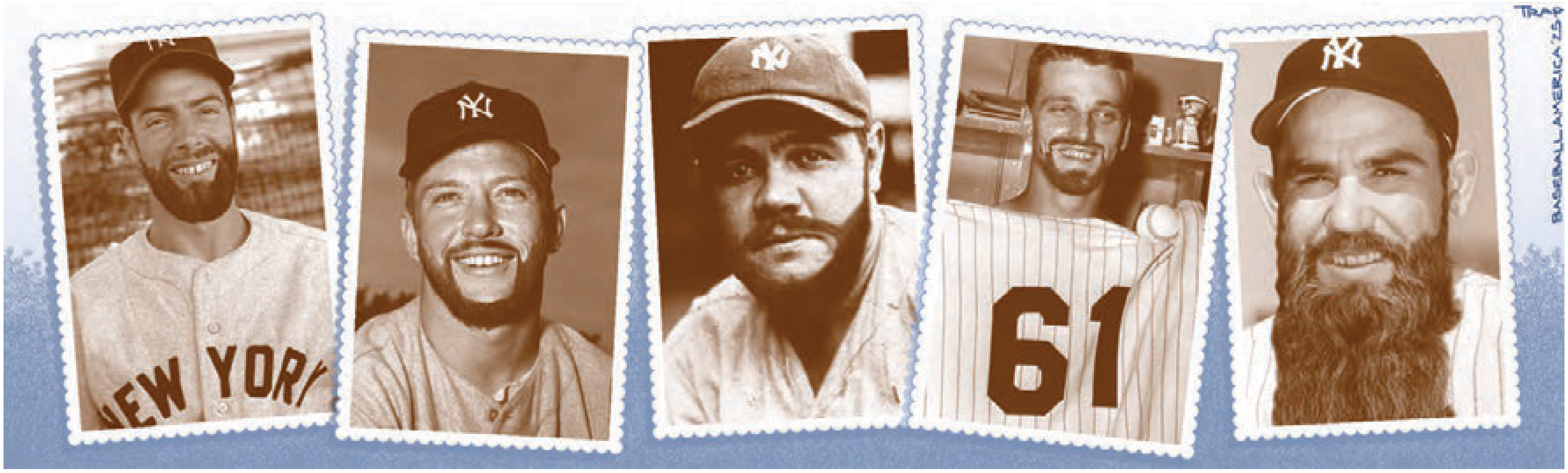

STORY
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No. 3 overall prospect Jackson Jobe

1

ROKI SASAKI IS THE RARE PITCHER TO RANK AS THE TOP PROSPECT IN BASEBALL. Rarely does a pitcher occupy the top spot on the Top 100 Prospects list. Injury is a constant occupational hazard, making position players far more likely to rank No. 1. But Sasaki is special. He is also the first pitcher to rank No. 1 since fellow Japanese ace Daisuke Matsuzaka reached the Top 100 summit in 2007.

SEE PAGE 13: TOP 100 PROSPECTS

2

SASAKI HEADS SIX PITCHERS WHO RANK AMONG THE TOP 10 PROSPECTS IN BASEBALL. NO TOP 100 PROSPECTS CLASS HAS EVER HAD MORE. Led by Roki Sasaki at No. 1 and Jackson Jobe at No. 3, a total of six pitchers rank among the top 10 most elite prospects in the game. Just three other Top 100 Prospects classes in 36 seasons have had that many pitchers crowded near the top of the list. For this year at least, the arms have it!

SEE PAGE 6: FIRST PITCH

3

SASAKI CAN ALSO EARN THE DODGERS A DRAFT PICK AFTER THE FIRST ROUND. As if adding the No. 1 prospect in the world weren't enough for the Dodgers, they can also gain a draft pick after the first round in 2026 if Sasaki wins NL Rookie of the Year in 2025. The 23-year-old Japanese superstar is eligible for the Prospect Promotion Incentive program because he is classified as an international amateur.

SEE PAGE 19: TOP 100 PROSPECTS

4

THE DODGERS HAVE MORE JAPANESE STARPOWER THAN ANY MLB TEAM EVER. With Roki Sasaki joining Shohei Ohtani and Yoshinobu Yamamoto in Los Angeles, the Dodgers will have more Japanese talent on one roster than any team ever assembled this side of Nippon Professional Baseball. Some contenders to the throne include the current Cubs with Shota Imanaga and Seiya Suzuki and also the early 2000s Mariners with Ichiro Suzuki and Kazuhiro Sasaki. Later, Ichiro teamed with Kenji Johjima in Seattle as well.

5

OHTANI GOES FOR THE MVP GRAND SLAM. Shohei Ohtani has done things in MLB that once seemed impossible. So it only makes sense that he has a chance to accomplish something that is (almost) impossible—winning a fourth MVP award. Not only would an MVP win this year be Ohtani's third in a row, but it would place him in a group all his own as a four-time winner. Barry Bonds won seven MVP awards. No other player in history has more than three.

6

KERSHAW NEEDS 32 STRIKEOUTS TO REACH 3,000. Clayton Kershaw signed on for another year with the Dodgers in 2025. The 37-year-old won't be ready for Opening Day after having offseason toe and knee surgeries, but he doesn't have to be to reach 3,000 strikeouts and become the 20th pitcher ever to reach the milestone. At his 2024 strikeout rate, Kershaw would need to pitch about 40 innings this season to achieve 3,000.

YLINES 2025 BIG YEAR DODGERS)

by MATT EDDY

Gunnar Henderson

Roki Sasaki

7

BOBBY WITT JR., GUNNAR HENDERSON AND ELLY DE LA CRUZ FORM BASEBALL'S LATEST HOLY TRINITY OF SHORTSTOPS.

Seldom has MLB seen such a superstar shortstop constellation. In the late 1990s, Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez and Nomar Garciaparra formed a so-called Holy Trinity of young shortstops. Then in the mid 2010s, Francisco Lindor, Carlos Correa and Corey Seager all rose to prominence at the same time. Today, Witt, Henderson and De La Cruz carry on the shortstop supernova tradition.

SEE PAGE 30: SHORTSTOP SUPERNOVAS

8

THE ATHLETICS AND RAYS WILL PLAY THEIR HOME GAMES IN MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARKS.

The Rays lost access to Tropicana Field when Hurricane Milton blew the roof off, while the Athletics lost access to the Oakland Coliseum when their lease expired. Both teams will play all their home games in minor league ballparks this season—and likely beyond—with the Rays in Tampa and the A's in Sacramento.

9

TEAMS ARE FAST-TRACKING DRAFT PICKS TO MLB.

Six of the top 11 players drafted in 2023 reached MLB by the end of the 2024 season. The list includes No. 1 pick Paul Skenes, the Pirates ace who won NL Rookie of the Year. Look for this trend of teams fast-tracking college stars to MLB to continue. The most likely players to debut this season from the 2024 draft include Angels second baseman Christian Moore and Athletics first baseman Nick Kurtz. No. 1 pick Travis Bazzana of the Guardians and No. 5 pick Hagen Smith of the White Sox might not be far behind. And speaking of the draft . . .

10

THE ROCKIES COULD LOSE 100 GAMES AND DRAFT NO EARLIER THAN 10TH IN 2026.

The Rockies appear destined to finish with one of the lowest win totals this season, but because they made lottery picks in the 2024 and 2025 drafts, they cannot draft earlier than 10th overall in 2026. And speaking of 100-loss teams getting lower draft picks . . .

11

THE WHITE SOX, WHO LOST 121 GAMES IN 2024, WILL DRAFT 10TH OVERALL THIS YEAR.

Despite their record-setting futility in 2024, the White Sox were ineligible for a high pick in the 2025 draft. It has to do with Chicago receiving a lottery pick—defined as one of the top six overall—in 2024 and being a club that pays into revenue sharing.

12

THE LOWER DRAFT PICK NOTWITHSTANDING, THE 2025 WHITE SOX WILL TRY TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM IGNOMINY.

The White Sox won 93 games and the AL Central in 2021. Three years later they accomplished something else entirely. Chicago rode a 14-50 second half to 121 losses, surpassing the expansion 1962 Mets for the all-time record for futility. Now, the White Sox will look to turn the page by becoming a garden-variety bad team that loses 100 games or so.

BRANDON SLOTER/GETTY IMAGES (SASAKI); ALEX BIERENS DE HAAN/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES (JOBE); DOUGLAS P. DEFELICE/GETTY IMAGES (HENDERSON)

STORYLINES

13

THE ORIOLES ARE ADJUSTING THEIR LEFT FIELD DIMENSIONS. AGAIN.

Baltimore pushed back its left field wall at Camden Yards in 2022 to neutralize home runs—but they went too far. MLB Statcast indicates that the Orioles lost more homers than their opponents, 72 to 65. This year, the wall will be closer by as much as 20 feet in spots, which is great news for Orioles first baseman Ryan Mountcastle, who lost 11 home runs to "Walltimore."

14

THE METS SIGNED JUAN SOTO TO A RECORD-SETTING CONTRACT.

The Mets made a Winter Meetings splash by signing Soto to a 15-year, $765 million contract. It is a record for an athlete in a North American team sport. What's more, if Soto wins an MVP, he will become the first in Mets franchise history, which dates back to 1962. Every other team but the 1998 expansion D-backs and Rays has at least one MVP.

15

THE TWINS ARE FOR SALE.

The Pohlad family has owned the Twins since 1984, making them one of the longest-tenured ownership groups in MLB. That could change this year if they are successful in finding a buyer for the venerable franchise. The White Sox are rumored to be for sale, as are the Nationals. Arte Moreno toyed with selling the Angels until pulling the club off the market in early 2023.

Juan Soto

16

AARON JUDGE AND BRYCE HARPER CAN JOIN THE THREE-TIME MVP CLUB.

Aaron Judge won MVPs in two of the past three seasons. Another win this year would make him a three-time MVP. Bryce Harper also has two career MVP awards. The list of three-time MVPs is as distinguished as it sounds: Shohei Ohtani, Mike Trout, Albert Pujols, Alex Rodriguez, Mike Schmidt, Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Roy Campanella, Stan Musial and Jimmie Foxx.

17

ICHIRO, SABATHIA AND WAGNER WILL BE INDUCTED INTO THE HALL OF FAME.

One-time Baseball America cover subjects Ichiro Suzuki and CC Sabathia sailed into Cooperstown on the first ballot and will be enshrined in July. Billy Wagner made it on his 10th and final appearance. Further down the ballot, Carlos Beltran, the 1999 BA Rookie of the Year, cleared 70% of the vote. Andruw Jones, two-time BA Minor League Player of the Year, achieved two-thirds of the vote. Both will likely headline the Hall of Fame class of 2026—partially because the top newcomers are Cole Hamels and Ryan Braun.

Baseball America

TOP 10 PROSPECTS

Complete Minor League Statistics, Including Short-Season Leagues

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ASIAN HERO

MAJOR LEAGUE MIDSEASON UPDATE

Bold Predictions For The Second Half

Midseason Award Winners & All-Stars

Highs & Lows For Every Organization

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MLB AND ESPN PART WAYS.

Unless MLB and ESPN come to a new agreement, this season will be the final one that baseball will air on The Worldwide Leader in Sports. Both parties announced in February that they are opting out of the current $550-million-a-year contract. ESPN wanted to pay less per year for its broadcasting package that includes Sunday Night Baseball, the Home Run Derby and Wild Card Series games. MLB said it was unhappy with ESPN's ever-decreasing coverage of baseball. MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said he expects to find a new partner, either on the broadcast or streaming side.

FOR 2025

Athletics 2024 first-rounder Nick Kurtz

No. 5 prospect Walker Jenkins of the Twins

19

THE ATHLETICS, BRAVES AND RED SOX HAVE MULTIPLE PROMISING ROOKIES.

The 2025 rookie class looks less formidable than recent seasons, but three teams are determined to beat the odds. Atlanta, Boston and the relocated-to-Sacramento Athletics are each poised to benefit from multiple rookie-eligible players this season.

SEE PAGE 48: TOP 20 ROOKIES

20

STILL, OVERALL MINOR LEAGUE TALENT IS DOWN.

The past few prospect classes brimmed with star talent, which is evident in the high-quality Rookie of the Year races in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The level of talent in the minor leagues appears to be lower this year, but the show goes on. Favorites to win the 2025 Minor League Player of the Year include Twins outfielder Walker Jenkins, Giants first baseman Bryce Eldridge and Rangers shortstop Sebastian Walcott.

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TWO MINOR LEAGUE TEAMS ARE RELOCATING.

Every time MLB updates its minor league facility standards, it prompts teams who cannot comply with the standards to relocate. The first wave hits in 2025. The Braves' Double-A affiliate moves from Pearl, Miss., to Columbus, Ga., and will play as the Columbus Clingstones. The Rangers' Down East affiliate moves from Kinston, N.C., to Spartanburg, S.C., and will play as the Hub City Spartanburgers.

SEE PAGE 60

22

THE CAROLINA AND SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUES ARE REALIGNING—SLIGHTLY.

Not only does Down East relocate to Spartanburg this season, but the Rangers affiliate also switches classifications from Low-A to High-A and joins the South Atlantic League. Replacing Down East in the Low-A Carolina League is Hickory, formerly the Rangers' High-A SAL affiliate.

23

THREE OTHER MINOR LEAGUE TEAMS CHANGED THEIR IDENTITIES.

The Oklahoma City Baseball Club will now be the Oklahoma City Comets, the Tennessee Smokies are now the Knoxville Smokies, and the Bowie Baysox are now the Chesapeake Baysox.

24

DIAMOND BASEBALL HOLDINGS NOW OWNS 41 MINOR LEAGUE TEAMS.

The private equity firm Diamond Baseball Holdings owns minor league franchises in every corner of the U.S.—as well as the lone Canadian team in Vancouver. DBH owns a team in every full-season league but the Florida State League. But that's only because MLB organizations own their FSL affiliates. DBH bought 12 teams in 2024 and will assuredly be adding more.

25

THE REDS AND BRAVES WILL PLAY A REGULAR SEASON GAME ON AN ACTUAL RACETRACK.

MLB has held regular season games in other countries, at the Field of Dreams and at Rickwood Field in Birmingham. This year, the Braves and Reds will play somewhere new: on the infield of the Bristol Motor Speedway in Tennessee. The Aug. 2 game in the first-ever Speedway Classic. ■

MIKE JANES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (JENKINS), PETER JONELEIT/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES (SOTO), NORM HALL/GETTY IMAGES (KURTZ)

THE LEGEND OF ROKI

Like most legends, Roki Sasaki's story begins with tragedy.

When he was nine, his father and grandparents were killed by the tsunami caused by the massive Tohoku earthquake that struck Japan's east coast in 2011.

Sasaki, his mother and two brothers lived in a nursing home before resettling in the small coastal city of Ofunato. Sasaki began playing baseball as an escape and blossomed into the country's top amateur pitcher.

At Ofunato High, he reached 101 mph to break Shohei Ohtani's national high school record. He received further acclaim when he threw a 12-inning complete game with 21 strikeouts on 194 pitches in a regional qualifier for Koshien, Japan's famed national high school tournament.

Chiba Lotte selected Sasaki with the first overall pick in the 2019 Nippon Professional Baseball draft and, cognizant of protecting his arm, sat him during the 2020 season and used him sparingly in 2021.

Once Chiba Lotte turned him loose in 2022, Sasaki became an international sensation. At 20 years old, he pitched a perfect game with an NPB-record 19 strikeouts. He threw eight more perfect innings his next start and finished the year with 173 strikeouts, second in the Pacific League.

He made his first appearance on U.S. soil at the 2023 World Baseball Classic semifinals against Mexico and averaged 100.5 mph, helping lead Japan to the gold medal. Sasaki made just 15 starts in 2023 due to a torn left oblique and 18 starts in 2024 due to shoulder fatigue, but he starred when healthy.

Respecting Sasaki's desire to play in MLB, Chiba Lotte posted him after the 2024 season, three years earlier than most Japanese players cross over by achieving "foreign professional" status.

—Kyle Glaser

D
Dodgers
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Roki Sasaki will pitch all season at age 23.

SCOUTING REPORT

Sasaki has a lean, projectable, 6-foot-4, 202-pound frame and an explosive arsenal that rivals any in MLB. His fastball sits 96-100 mph and touches 102 with remarkably little effort and jumps on hitters with late explosion. His fastball occasionally flattens out and plays below its raw velocity, but it's still a plus-plus pitch he can blow by hitters with his pure power. Sasaki's primary weapon is a devastating splitter that most observers consider the best in the world. The pitch comes out of the same slot as his fastball at 88-91 mph before diving hard into the ground to draw awkward swings. He cuts his splitter in both directions and throws it with so much power and movement that catchers sometimes struggle to handle it. Sasaki mostly uses his fastball to get ahead of hitters and his splitter to finish them, but he began integrating his slider more in 2024 to become a more complete pitcher. His slider sits 83-85 mph with late, vertical snap and projects to be a plus offering once he starts throwing it with more conviction. He also drops in an occasional 80-81 mph curveball to steal strikes early in counts. Sasaki ties his head-turning arsenal together with plus control and is an elite competitor who goes right after hitters. The only source of concern is his health. Sasaki's velocity dropped in 2024 as he battled arm soreness, and he has never pitched more than 129.1 innings in a season. A lack of upper body strength causes timing issues in his delivery and puts excess stress on his shoulder and elbow.

Sasaki projects to be a No. 1 starter as long as he stays healthy.

—Kyle Glaser

WHY SASAKI IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE TOP 100

Sasaki in 2019

Last year, righthander Yoshinobu Yamamoto signed with the Dodgers as one of the best pitchers to come over from Japan in several years. He did not rank as a Top 100 Prospect.

One year later, righthander Roki Sasaki has signed with the Dodgers as one of the best Japanese pitchers to come to MLB in years, and he ranks No. 1 on the Top 100.

Why did we apply different standards to Yamamoto and Sasaki?

It all boils down to the "foreign professional" definition laid out by MLB in its Collective Bargaining Agreement with the players.

Yamamoto was 25 years old with seven years of experience in a top-level international professional league when he came to the U.S. after his Japanese team posted him. That effectively made him a major league free agent, though his NPB team received a posting fee.

The same foreign professional standard applies this year to Dodgers second baseman Hyeseong Kim and Orioles righthander Tomoyuki Sugano. Neither is eligible for the Top 100 Prospects.

Sasaki, like Shohei Ohtani before him, is coming to the U.S. while not meeting the "foreign professional" standard. That means he was subject to the international bonus pool limits, and he could only sign a minor league contract with a signing bonus that fit within teams' international bonus pool limits.

The Dodgers could not offer Sasaki anything more than a minor league contract and a bonus—he signed for $6.5 million—nor could they promise him a contract extension or even guarantee an Opening Day roster spot.

Baseball America once treated all players coming from Japan, Cuba or Korea as eligible prospects, which is why Japanese superstars such as Ichiro Suzuki, Hideki Matsui, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Yu Darvish and Masahiro Tanaka all ranked as Top 100 Prospects.

—J.J. Cooper

Scan the QR code to watch Baseball America's J.J. Cooper, Geoff Pontes and Carlos Collazo break down the Top 100 list

THE RARE PITCHER AS NO. 1 PROSPECT

Dodgers righthander Roki Sasaki is the No. 1 prospect in baseball. This is a rare occurrence for a rare talent like the 23-year-old Japanese ace.

A pitcher has ranked as the No. 1 overall prospect for Baseball America just seven times in 36 years of the Top 100 Prospects exercise.

Here is a look at the six pitchers who preceded Sasaki as No. 1 overall prospects.

1990: Steve Avery, LHP, Braves

Drafted third overall out of a Michigan high school in 1988, Avery shot to the top of the inaugural Top 100 in 1990. He made his MLB debut that season as a 20-year-old and quickly ascended to staff workhorse for Atlanta before shoulder issues cut short his career. Avery went 96-83, 4.19 in 11 MLB seasons, was MVP of the 1991 NL Championship Series and compiled 13.8 bWAR.

1991: Todd Van Poppel, RHP, Athletics

Bonus demands pushed Texas prep Van Poppel to the 14th pick in 1990 draft, and he signed for a record $1.2 million. He threw hard as a teenager, but MLB hitters timed him up. Van Poppel went 40-52, 5.58 in 11 big league seasons, most of them as a reliever.

1992: Brien Taylor, LHP, Yankees

One of two No. 1 overall picks in Yankees history, Taylor had it all but lost it in an offseason fight. Drafted out of a North Carolina high school in 1991, he shot to Double-A as a 21-year-old in 1993. Taylor tore his shoulder and labrum that December and never recovered his stuff. He failed to reach the big leagues.

2000: Rick Ankiel, LHP, Cardinals

A phenom at his Florida high school, Ankiel was drafted in the 1997 second round. He signed for $2.5 million, won Minor League Player of the Year in 1999 and finished runner-up for NL Rookie of the Year in 2000. Ankiel's control deserted him in the postseason that year. He could hit, though, and after a few unsuccessful seasons trying to chase away the yips, he resurfaced as an MLB outfielder from 2007 to 2013.

2002: Josh Beckett, RHP, Marlins

Beckett is the last No. 1 overall pitching prospect without prior experience in a major league. The Texas prep rode a devastating fastball/curveball combo to 138 wins, 35 bWAR and a 2003 World Series MVP award with the Marlins. Beckett added a ring with the 2007 Red Sox.

2007: Daisuke Matsuzaka, RHP, Red Sox

Matsuzaka wowed for Japan at the inaugural World Baseball Classic in 2006. Signed by Boston after that season for $103 million—counting his posting fee—he experienced early success, but his control wasn't sharp enough or stuff crisp enough to forge a long career.

—Matt Eddy

WALLY SKALIJ/LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES (MAIN), SPORTS NIPPON/GETTY IMAGES (2019)

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

#4 KRISTIAN CAMPBELL

About the Top 100 Prospects

■ Players qualify for the ranking if they have 130 or fewer major league at-bats or 50 or fewer major league innings in their career. Major league service time is not considered.

■ Each player's listed age is his baseball age—as of June 30—in 2025.

■ The estimated time of arrival, or ETA, is the season when the player is projected to reach the big leagues, if only for a few games.

■ The scouting grades are projected future grades on the 20-80 scale, where 50 is average. Position players are assessed for their ability to hit for average, as well as their power, speed, fielding and throwing arm. Pitchers are graded on the quality of their pitches and their control.

1. ROKI SASAKI
DODGERS, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.

Average fastball velocity: 97 mph in NPB.

FB: 70. | **CB:** 45. | **SL:** 60. | **SPL:** 80. | **CTL:** 60.

The star of the offseason, Sasaki inked with the Dodgers and immediately added yet another star into the Chavez Ravine supernova. The 23-year-old isn't a finished product, but he starred in Japan and has ace upside.

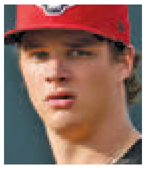
2. ROMAN ANTHONY
RED SOX, OF

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2025.

90th percentile exit velocity: 109 mph.

HIT: 60. | **POW:** 65. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 50.

Anthony's breakout began in 2023 and continued through 2024, when he blitzed the upper levels and vaulted himself into the highest prospect tier. His contact, plate discipline and power should give him all the ingredients to become a regular in Boston's lineup by the end of the 2025 season.



3. JACKSON JOBE
TIGERS, RHP

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.

Average fastball velocity: 97 mph.

FB: 70. | **SWP:** 70. | **CUT:** 60. | **CHG:** 60. | **CTL:** 60.

After injuries marred the early portion of his career, Jobe emerged in full in 2024. Tigers fans got a taste of their top prospect toward the end of the season. Now, he has a chance to pitch toward the top of Detroit's rotation.

4. KRISTIAN CAMPBELL
RED SOX, 2B

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.

90th percentile exit velocity: 107 mph.

HIT: 60. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

Campbell started making noise in minor league spring training thanks to tweaks that vastly improved his offensive game. Those results carried through to the regular season, when he moved from High-A to Triple-A and became the Minor League Player of the Year.

5. WALKER JENKINS
TWINS, OF

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2026.

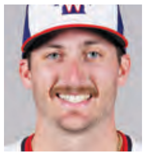
90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.

HIT: 70. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 60. | **ARM:** 50.

Jenkins was one of the most celebrated prospects as an amateur and still shows a tremendously high ceiling, albeit after a 2024 season hamstrung by injuries. He has the upside of a five-tool player, especially if he can add a bit more impact to his contact as he grows into his body.

#2 ROMAN ANTHONY

TOM DIPACE



6. DYLAN CREWS
NATIONALS, OF

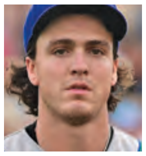
Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 106 mph
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 70. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 60.

The Nationals' top prospect and the No. 2 overall pick in the 2023 draft reached the majors in 2024 and showed flashes of his potential. He hasn't dominated the upper levels or the majors quite yet, but he's still got plenty of time and the tools to make an impact in D.C.

7. BUBBA CHANDLER
PIRATES, RHP

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 97 mph.
FB: 70. | **CB:** 45. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 60. | **CTL:** 55.

After being drafted as a two-way player, Chandler really took off once he began focusing solely on pitching. Now, his athleticism and stuff have allowed him to access the upper reaches of his ceiling and position himself as the next product of Pittsburgh's pitching pipeline.



8. CHASE DOLLANDER
ROCKIES, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 96 mph.
FB: 70. | **CB:** 55. | **CH:** 45. | **CUT:** 60. | **CTL:** 55.

After a down season in his draft year at Tennessee, Dollander fell to the Rockies, who were all too happy to pounce. The righthander rewarded their faith by tearing through the minor leagues in his pro debut and establishing himself as one of the game's top arm talents. The next test might be Coors Field.

9. ANDREW PAINTER
PHILLIES, RHP

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 97 mph.
FB: 70. | **CB:** 50. | **SL:** 60. | **CH:** 55. | **CTL:** 70.

Painter dazzled in his first full pro season in 2022, then missed the next two seasons while recovering from Tommy John surgery. He returned in the Arizona Fall League and showed shockingly little rust over the course of six short starts. He has a chance to reach Philadelphia in 2025.

#11 CARSON WILLIAMS

10. NOAH SCHULTZ
WHITE SOX, LHP

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 65. | **SL:** 70. | **CH:** 55. | **CUT:** 50. | **CTL:** 60

Schultz is the top lefthanded pitching prospect in the game thanks to an enviable arsenal and funky delivery that decimates hitters and evokes memories of some of the best southpaws. The next step will be going deeper into games. He hasn't pitched past the fourth inning in any of his 16 professional starts.

11. CARSON WILLIAMS
RAYS, SS

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90 percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 40. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 70. | **ARM:** 70.

Williams has long earned a rep as a defensive wizard. In 2024, he broke out in the batter's box with a big-time season in the notoriously pitcher-friendly Southern League. He was one of just eight minor league shortstops to reach the 20-homer plateau and was the only one of the group to swipe 30 or more bags.

12. BRYCE ELDRIDGE
GIANTS, 1B

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 107 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 70. | **RUN:** 30. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 55.

Eldridge is one of the biggest position players in the minors, and his power lives up to every expectation foretold by his 6-foot-7, 225-pound frame. No longer a two-way player, Eldridge has focused on being one of the best young power prospects in the game, which he proved up to Triple-A in 2024.

13. JORDAN LAWLAR
D-BACKS, SS

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 101 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 70. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 55.

Lawlar was supposed to establish himself as a key piece of Arizona's lineup in 2024. Instead, he spent most of the year battling injuries and accumulated just 85 at-bats. He'll look to push the reset button in 2025 and begin to show the well-balanced skill set that could lead to a big role in the D-backs' uprising.

14. SAMUEL BASALLO
ORIOLES, C

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 107 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 70. | **RUN:** 40. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 70.

Basallo is the game's top catching prospect thanks to monster upside in the batter's box and an outstanding throwing arm. Adley Rutschman's presence in Baltimore lessens the pressure on Basallo to stick at catcher, but his offensive ceiling should make him a valuable part of the Orioles' lineup for years to come.

15. MARCELO MAYER
RED SOX, SS

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 107 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 40. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

Injuries limited Mayer's 2024 season to just 77 games at Double-A Portland, but when he was on the field he showed strong hitting potential with hints of power mixed in. If he can stick at shortstop, he'll help Roman Anthony and Kristian Campbell form a huge piece of Boston's future core.

The best individual pitches in this year's Top 100

The best major league pitchers have at least one out pitch. That's why we dig deep into the unique characteristics of each pitching prospect's individual pitches. The best individual pitches—those with the most intriguing combinations of velocity and movement—will give pitchers the best chance for future major league success.

We break pitches into three broad categories because there can be ambiguity in how pitch types are marked.

■ **Fastballs:** Four-seam and two-seam shapes are combined. In the top five displayed here, only Jarlin Susana is graded on his two-seam fastball.

■ **Breaking pitches:** Sliders, curveballs and cutters are combined, though only sliders cracked the top five.

■ **Offspeed pitches:** Changeups and splitters are combined into one category, though only changeups are graded in the top five pitches displayed here.

TOP 100 BY ORG

7 MARINERS

6 DODGERS, RAYS

5 CUBS, GUARDIANS, TIGERS, WHITE SOX

4 BREWERS, METS, PHILLIES, TWINS, RED SOX

3 ATHLETICS, CARDINALS, NATIONALS, ORIOLES, PIRATES, RANGERS, REDS, ROCKIES

2 ANGELS, BRAVES, D-BACKS, MARLINS, PADRES, ROYALS, YANKEES

1 ASTROS, BLUE JAYS, GIANTS

#67 JARLIN SUSANA

FASTBALL

Player	Team	Pitches	Velo	Max	IVB	HB	Spin	VAA	Ext	Rel. Height
Bubba Chandler	PIT	1133	96.8	99.5	18.1	8.0	2405	-4.20	6.64	69.2
Chase Dollander	COL	1291	96.3	100.0	16.3	11.2	2497	-4.02	5.99	65.8
Jackson Jobe	DET	639	96.5	99.7	18.2	9.0	2449	-4.47	6.00	73.1
Jacob Misiorowski	MIL	1021	96.9	100.7	15.8	10.7	2628	-4.10	7.42	64.0
Jarlin Susana	WSH	303	98.4	102.6	7.5	14.9	2366	-5.97	6.39	71.1

Fastball velocity on the Top 100 continues to climb. At this point, starters need to average a minimum of 96 mph to even be considered for best fastball. The median velocity for Top 100 pitchers this year was 94.7 mph. This differs a bit for lefthanders—not a single lefty on the Top 100 averaged more than 94.7 mph this season.

Bubba Chandler takes the honor for the top fastball on the list. Fastball quality has never been more important or as easily measured. Chandler combines a blend of traits to make his four-seam stand out. He sits 96-98 mph with plus ride, a flat vertical approach angle, high spin efficiency and armside run.

Chase Dollander has the highest-performing fastball on the Top 100. He also threw his heater more than anyone else on the list. Dollander generated a 20.4% swinging-strike rate on his fastball, highest among Top 100 peers. While Dollander's fastball is slightly slower than Chandler's, he throws it from a lower release height, creating a Jacob deGrom-like 4.0 vertical approach angle. Dollander's slightly below-average extension puts him behind Chandler.

We briefly got a glimpse of **Jackson Jobe's** elite fastball in the majors in 2024. He has arguably the best arsenal among Top 100 prospects, and it's led by his plus-plus fastball.

Jacob Misiorowski is the extension standout at nearly 7.5 feet. This allows his fastball to play up and keeps it ranked squarely among the best on the list. Misiorowski's combination of velocity and deception makes it difficult to barrel.

Jarlin Susana's two-seamer is a turbo sinker at 98-100 mph that touches nearly 103. Susana threw his four-seamer more than his two-seam in 2024, but the two-seamer projects to be his primary fastball at peak. His ability to create sink in the upper registers with heavy armside run makes it a unique pitch.

SLIDER

Player	Team	Pitches	Velo	Max	IVB	HB	Spin	VAA	HAA	Ext
Jarlin Susana	WSH	758	88.8	95.7	-2.8	-5.2	2590	-8.05	-2.76	6.38
Kumar Rocker	TEX	160	85.8	93.7	-3.5	-1.4	2349	-8.87	-3.07	6.48
Noah Schultz	CWS	444	82.5	89.7	1.1	12.5	2873	-7.44	3.88	5.82
Nolan McLean	NYM	647	85.1	92.2	0.5	-13.9	2983	-6.74	-4.21	5.95
Brandon Sproat	NYM	452	85.7	90.8	2.8	-7.2	2357	-7.51	-3.99	6.27

Jarlin Susana is certain to stand out on any article detailing the top individual pitches. Even with a fastball sitting nearly 100 mph, his slider might be a better pitch. Susana'a 88-90 mph slider touches 96 with an significant vertical drop. He generated a 24.7% swinging-strike rate against the pitch, the seventh-highest of any pitch thrown by a Top 100 prospect. His power and wicked breaking pitch generate whiffs and chases.

The highest swinging-strike rate of any pitch thrown by a Top 100 Prospect belongs to **Kumar Rocker's** slider. His minor league sample is small, but he generated a 40.6% swinging-strike rate when he threw his slider against minor leaguers. His slider didn't perform as well against MLB hitters, but some of that is to be expected. It's a hard gyro slider that generates whiffs out of the zone.

Noah Schultz and **Nolan McLean** are the sweeper representatives on the list. Each generates heavy gloveside run. McLean's slider has an outlier combination of power and movement as it sits 84-86 mph with nearly 14 inches of sweep. While McLean didn't miss as many bats as expected with the pitch, it was rarely hit hard.

Schultz throws a more traditional sweeper that sits 82-83 mph with around a foot of break. Lefthanded sweepers are unusual. As we saw with **Ricky Tiedemann** in past years, lefties can often face less platoon-split differential if they can back-door the pitch down and away to their glove sides. Schultz generated swinging strikes at a rate of 19.8% against his slider and showed excellent command with a 42.7% called-strike rate.

Finally, **Brandon Sproat** has a more traditional slider shape, but he rips it off at 85-86 mph and has touched as high as 90. Sproat generated swinging strikes at a rate of 16.8% in 2024 while showing a consistent ability to fool opposing hitters.

Sliders dominate this list. Many pitchers throw cutters and curveballs, but very few use either as a primary breaking pitch.

CHANGEUP

Player	Team	Pitches	Velo	Max	IVB	HB	Spin	VAA
Travis Sykora	WSH	203	84.8	89.3	8.9	6.8	1281	-7.29
Tink Hence	STL	197	82.7	87.7	12.1	15.5	1963	-7.19
Alejandro Rosario	TEX	243	90.8	93.4	2.7	14.9	1490	-6.81
Thomas White	MIA	259	85.6	89.2	7.3	-15.5	1875	-6.81
AJ Smith-Shawver	ATL	369	83.6	89.6	6.4	11	1127	-7.78

Travis Sykora has the best changeup. It's arguably one of the best single pitches in the Top 100. Sykora laid waste to Low-A competition in large part due to the quality of his mid-80s changeup with splitter-like movement. His 28.1% swinging-strike rate on the pitch is elite. Sykora creates excellent vertical separation off his fastball, while seeing a full 10 mph of separation from his heater.

Tink Hence took a massive step forward with his changeup in 2023—and that progress held in 2024. He generates excellent vertical life and nearly 12 mph of velocity separation off his fastball. The pitch generated swings and misses at the second-highest rate on the list. It's a pure chase pitch but an effective part of Hence's arsenal.

Alejandro Rosario's changeup boasts the third-highest swinging-strike rate of changeups thrown 100 times or more in 2024. Rosario shows an excellent combination of the ability to miss bats, generate chases and throw strikes. Rosario's ability to kill lift on his changeup gives it dramatic vertical separation between fastball and changeup on the list.

Thomas White dominated Class A competition in 2024 while showing a plus changeup. It generated a swinging-strike rate of 24.3%, while producing the highest called-strike rate on the list at 25.8%. White doesn't generate as much vertical separation as others, but the 10 mph delta off his fastball is effective.

AJ Smith-Shawver shows an uncanny ability to kill spin on his changeup, with the second-lowest spin rate of any offspeed pitch thrown by a Top 100 Prospect. The pitch generates whiffs from minor league hitters at impressive rates. Smith-Shawver's changeup success makes him a rotation candidate.

—Geoff Pontes

BRIAN WESTERHOLT/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (WILLIAMS), TOM DIPACE (SUSANA)

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

16. COLT EMERSON
MARINERS, SS

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2027.

90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.

HIT: 60. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 55.

Emerson burst onto the scene in 2023 after the Mariners selected him in the first round. He dealt with injuries in 2024 but showed plenty of flashes of his potential in a year split between the Class A levels. If the pure hitter can add more power, he'll move into the game's upper echelon.

17. JESUS MADE
BREWERS, SS

Age: 18. **ETA:** 2028.

90th percentile exit velocity: 104 mph.

HIT: 60. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

Made was easily the best prospect in the Dominican Summer League in 2024, when he produced a 1.013 OPS in his first pro season. He showed contact and impact uncommon for a player his age and should be the latest piece of Milwaukee's system to skip the Arizona Complex League and head straight to Low-A.

18. LEODALIS DE VRIES
PADRES, SS

Age: 18. **ETA:** 2027.

90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.

HIT: 60. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 50.

A year after Ethan Salas jumped from international free agency to Low-A, De Vries followed suit. He debuted in the California League and clubbed 11 home runs in 75 games. The total could have been higher if not for a shoulder injury that limited his exposure in the second half.

19. EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ
TWINS, OF

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.

90th percentile exit velocity: 110 mph.

HIT: 55. | **POW:** 70. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 55.

Rodriguez knows the strike zone better than most umpires and hits the ball extraordinarily hard, but can be beaten by quality pitches in the strike zone and runs high strikeout rates as a result. His offensive game will profile at any spot in the outfield, especially if he can improve his zone-contact rate.

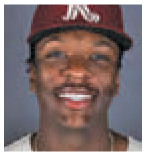
20. KUMAR ROCKER
RANGERS, RHP

Age: 25. **ETA:** 2025.

Average fastball velocity: 98 mph.

FB: 60. | **SL:** 70. | **CH:** 55. | **CUT:** 50. | **CTL:** 50.

In 2023, before he had Tommy John surgery, Rocker was annihilating the competition at High-A Hickory. Once he returned in 2024, he picked up right where he left off. Rocker cruised through the upper levels on the way to his MLB debut and has the stuff to pitch in the middle of a big league rotation.



21. SEBASTIAN WALCOTT
RANGERS, SS

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2026.

90th percentile exit velocity: 106 mph.

HIT: 50. | **POW:** 65. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 70.

Few prospects in the minors match Walcott's upside. The teenager blends massive raw power and elite arm strength. There are hit tool questions, and he's not a sure bet to stick at shortstop, but Walcott's dazzling array of tools, athleticism and upside hint at future stardom if it comes together.

22. MAX CLARK
TIGERS, OF

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.

90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.

HIT: 60. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 70. | **FLD:** 70. | **ARM:** 60.

The No. 3 overall pick in the 2023 draft, Clark has a polished, well-rounded skill set and a high motor. His double-plus speed and strong center field defense coupled with strong barrel skills provide a reasonably high floor, even if some question whether he'll become a star.

23. KEVIN McGONIGLE
TIGERS, SS

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.

90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.

HIT: 65. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 55.

McGonigle is a hitting machine. The 20-year-old has elite contact skills and rarely chases out of the zone. His power gains and shortstop defense in 2024 exceeded expectations, too. The 5-foot-10 infielder has all-star upside even if he has to shift to second base.

24. TRAVIS BAZZANA
GUARDIANS, 2B

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.

90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.

HIT: 65. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

The No. 1 pick in 2024 has exceptional bat-to-ball skills, an advanced approach and a swing optimized to get the most out of his above-average power. Bazzana needs to answer questions defensively, namely with his arm strength and accuracy, but he could settle in as Cleveland's long-term second baseman.

#27 CHASE BURNS

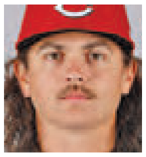
25. JJ WETHERHOLT
CARDINALS, SS

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.

90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.

HIT: 65. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

Scouts lauded Wetherholt's pure hitting ability at West Virginia, and his advanced plate skills held up in his foray into pro ball. Even better? Wetherholt showed above-average power and the Cardinals think he has a chance to stick at shortstop. If he does, he has all-star potential.



26. RHETT LOWDER
REDS, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.

Average fastball velocity: 94 mph.

FB: 50. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 55. | **CTL:** 70.

Lowder doesn't overwhelm hitters. Instead, he works with precise craftsmanship. Few prospects can match Lowder's double-plus control or ability to fill up the zone. His lack of a putaway pitch limits his ceiling to a midrotation starter, but he has already reached MLB and should settle in with Cincinnati in short order.

27. CHASE BURNS
REDS, RHP

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.

Average fastball velocity: 98 mph (NCAA).

FB: 70. | **CB:** 55. | **SL:** 70. | **CH:** 50. | **CTL:** 50.

Most pitchers yearn for one 70-grade offering. Burns attacks hitters with two. He has a special fastball/slider combination and both his curveball and changeup made strides last year. Burns has No. 2 starter upside if his control and command hold up in pro ball. He'll make his pro debut in 2025 and could move quickly.

28. JASSON DOMINGUEZ
YANKEES, OF

Age: 22. **ETA:** 20245

90th percentile exit velocity: 108 mph.

HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 60.

Dominguez has long been celebrated for his toolsy mixture of power, contact ability and speed. Injuries have waylaid his effort to refine his approach and harness his athleticism into more consistent defense. Dominguez should have every chance to win the Yankees' starting left field job this spring.

29. COBY MAYO
ORIOLES, 3B

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.

90th percentile exit velocity: 107 mph.

HIT: 50. | **POW:** 70. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 60.

Mayo has massive double-plus power and answered questions about his approach in 2024, even if he struggled in a brief big league cameo. The same can't be said for his defense. He'll need to make more accurate throws in 2025. Otherwise, a shift to first base is in the cards.

30. DALTON RUSHING
DODGERS, C/OF

Age: 24. **ETA:** 2025.

90th percentile exit velocity: 106 mph.

HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

Rushing's blend of power, plate discipline and improved contact helped him become one of the more productive hitters in the upper minors in 2024. While he's reliable behind the plate, his athleticism and speed may push him to left field or first base. His bat should impact the Dodgers' lineup at some point in 2025.

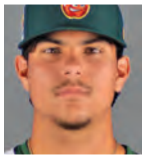
TOP 100 BY BIRTH COUNTRY

76 UNITED STATES

12 DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

4 VENEZUELA

1 AUSTRALIA, BAHAMAS, CANADA, COLOMBIA, CUBA, ITALY, JAPAN, PANAMA



31. ETHAN SALAS
PADRES, C

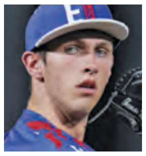
Age: 19. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 101 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 70. | **ARM:** 60.

Salas was the same age as most high school seniors as he struggled through 2024 with High-A Fort Wayne. Those most optimistic still see Gold Glove potential behind the dish, above-average bat-to-ball skills from the left side of the plate and a mature approach. He doesn't turn 19 until June.

32. JAISON CHOURIO
GUARDIANS, OF

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.
HIT: 65. | **POW:** 45. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 55.

A lithe switch-hitter, Chourio's burgeoning barrel skills and tremendous strike-zone awareness dazzle at a young age. He's also a plus runner who should stick in center field. Don't expect the same power upside as brother Jackson, though Jaison's upside could rival anyone in Cleveland's system if he unlocks a bit more thump.



33. THOMAS WHITE
MARLINS, LHP

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 60. | **SL:** 70. | **CH:** 60. | **CTL:** 45.

The 6-foot-5 White took a step forward in his first full pro season on the strength of a mid-90s heater that touched 98 mph and a retooled breaking pitch. White's strike-throwing requires further maintenance. He has all the ingredients to front a rotation one day and doesn't turn 21 until the end of September.

34. NICK KURTZ
ATHLETICS, 1B

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 109 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 40. | **FLD:** 60. | **ARM:** 50.

Kurtz is a massive presence in the batter's box who pairs significant raw power with a mature approach and surprisingly compact swing. He also has a chance to become a plus defender at first base. Kurtz needs to prove he can stay healthy. He has all-star upside and could even reach the big leagues by the end of 2025.

35. MATT SHAW
CUBS, 3B

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 45.

Shaw's bat drives his profile. He's an advanced, aggressive hitter who makes plenty of contact to all fields and has above-average power. His arm and actions are stretched a bit at third base, though the Cubs appear ready to give him every chance to win the job out of spring training.

36. AIDAN MILLER
PHILLIES, SS

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

Miller's surge to Double-A in 2024 hinged on improved in-game power and better shortstop defense. With a strong arm, average defense and a game geared toward impact, he has the look of an offensive-oriented slugger, regardless of whether he settles at shortstop or third base.

Roki Sasaki could earn the Dodgers an extra draft pick

#1 ROKI SASAKI

BILL MITCHELL (BURNS), BRANDON SLOTER/GETTY IMAGES (SASAKI)

The defending World Series champion Dodgers officially signed Japanese righthander Roki Sasaki on Jan. 22, providing an extreme example of the rich getting richer.

But there's also another way signing Sasaki could benefit the Dodgers. He could earn them a valuable draft pick as well.

Because he does not meet the Collective Bargaining Agreement definition of a "foreign professional," Sasaki is eligible for the Prospect Performance Incentive program.

The PPI initiative was introduced in 2022 as a means of incentivizing teams to carry their best prospects on Opening Day rosters rather then sending them to the minors to manipulate service time.

To meet PPI eligibility standards, a player must be a rookie with fewer than 60 days of MLB service time, including time on the injured list. He must accrue a full season of MLB service as a rookie, and he has to appear on two of three Top 100 Prospect lists by Baseball America, MLB.com and ESPN.com.

Players who meet the foreign professional standard are 25 years old or older and have seven or more years of experience in a top-level international league. They are viewed as akin to major league free agents and are explicitly ineligible for PPI.

Sasaki meets the rookie standard, and it would be shocking if he doesn't meet the full season of service time standard. He's unlikely to spend any time in the minors in 2025. Even if he misses time with an injury, time on the MLB injured list counts toward a full season of service.

So the only other hurdle is ranking on two of three Top 100 Prospects lists. Sasaki ranked No. 1 on all three.

While we no longer include foreign professionals in our Top 100 Prospects rankings, Sasaki is eligible because he signed a minor league contract and entered MLB through the international signing bonus pool system.

But qualifying for PPI is just the first step toward a draft pick. Next, a PPI eligible player must factor for a major award.

If Sasaki were to win the National League Rookie of the Year award in 2025, then the Dodgers will add a pick after the first round in 2026. Even if he fails to win ROY, a top three finish for the Cy Young Award before he qualifies for arbitration—in this case after the 2027 season—would also net a draft pick.

In 2024, the Diamondbacks picked 31st—they drafted Kentucky outfielder Ryan Waldschmidt—and the Orioles drafted 32nd—they selected Virginia shortstop Griff O'Ferrall—with PPI picks earned for Corbin Carroll and Gunnar Henderson's Rookie of the Year wins in 2023.

In 2023, the Mariners drafted high school outfielder Jonny Farmelo 29th overall with a PPI pick awarded for Julio Rodriguez's ROY win in 2022.

The Royals will get a PPI pick in 2025 because of Bobby Witt Jr.'s top three finish in the American League MVP race.

So in addition to gaining the value inherent in signing a potential star to a rate far below market value, the Dodgers signing Sasaki could also net them an additional draft pick.

—***JJ Cooper***

37. ANGEL GENAO
GUARDIANS, SS

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

Genao is aggressive at the dish for good reason. His elite hand-eye coordination and advanced approach suggest plus hitting potential. He's also a strong thrower. He's ready for Double-A, where further development of his defense and in-game power is required.

38. JACOB WILSON
ATHLETICS, SS

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 99 mph.
HIT: 70. | **POW:** 40. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 55.

Injuries shortened Wilson's season to just 53 games, but he hit an absurd .423 in the upper minors when healthy. Some question whether his ultra-aggressive approach will hold up against MLB pitchers. Still, his bat-to-ball skills are nearly unmatched and he's a sturdy defender expected to settle into a starting role in 2025.

39. COLSON MONTGOMERY
WHITE SOX, SS

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 55.

Montgomery's struggles at Triple-A in 2024 were stark. His pull-oriented approach was tested and he hit just .214/.329/.381 with 18 homers and 164 strikeouts in 130 games. Montgomery has an intriguing blend of lefthanded power and patience, though his size heightens the risk that he moves to third base.

40. HAGEN SMITH
WHITE SOX, LHP

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 70. | **SL:** 70. | **CH:** 45. | **CTL:** 50.

Low arm slot. High velocity. SEC pedigree. Smith checks a lot of boxes and fits the White Sox's lefthanded starter archetype typified by Chris Sale, Carlos Rodon, Garrett Crochet and Noah Schultz. The quality of Smith's fastball and slider set him apart and make him one of the top southpaw pitching prospects.

41. QUINN MATHEWS
CARDINALS, LHP

Age: 24. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 60. | **CB:** 45. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 65. | **CTL:** 60.

Baseball America's Minor League Pitcher of the Year added velocity in 2024 and mastered all four full-season levels of the minor leagues on his way to a rare 200-strikeout campaign on the farm. With a good build and well-rounded repertoire, Mathews should be a factor in the Cardinals' rotation for several years.

42. CHARLIE CONDON
ROCKIES, OF

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 108 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 70. | **RUN:** 40. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 55.

The College Player of the Year set a BBCOR record with 37 homers for Georgia, but nothing seemed to go right in his pro debut after he signed for a record $9.25 million bonus. Condon played through a hand injury while being bedeviled by spin. His immense power will play if he conquers his contact woes.

All-Helium Team

Here we present a lineup of players we expect to surge up the Top 100 Prospects ranking in 2024. Players are sorted to logical field positions to create a team.

LHP THOMAS WHITE, MARLINS **#33**

RHP TREVOR HARRISON, RAYS **#90**

C THAYRON LIRANZO, TIGERS **#69**

1B JAC CAGLIANONE, ROYALS **#63**

2B LUKE KEASCHALL, TWINS **#45**

3B CAM SMITH, ASTROS **#55**

SS COOPER PRATT, BREWERS **#50**

LF ZYHIR HOPE, DODGERS **#51**

CF JAISON CHOURIO, GUARDIANS **#32**

RF BRADEN MONTGOMERY, WHITE SOX **#66**

ROB TRINGALI/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES (WHITE), BRIAN WESTERHOLT/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (HARRISON), NORM HALL/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES (LIRANZO), JILL WEISLEDER/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES (CAGLIANONE), SAM HODDE/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES (KEASCHALL, PRATT), LARRY GOREN/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (HOPE), GENE WANG/GETTY IMAGES (CHOURIO), EMILEE CHINN/GETTY IMAGES (MONTGOMERY), JOE ROBBINS/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES (SMITH)

TOP 100 BY DRAFT ROUND

57%
FORTY-FOUR OF THE 77 DRAFTED PLAYERS IN THE TOP 100 WERE SELECTED IN THE FIRST ROUND

#57 KONNOR GRIFFIN

MIKE JANES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES

43. JEFERSON QUERO
BREWERS, C

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph (2023).
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 40. | **FLD:** 70. | **ARM:** 70.

Quero has one of the more well-rounded profiles among catching prospects. He has Gold Glove potential with a double-plus arm and incredible instincts. He has quality bat-to-ball skills and raw power that will be more than enough at the position, even after missing nearly all of 2024 with a shoulder injury.

44. JACOB MISIOROWSKI
BREWERS, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 97 mph.
FB: 80. | **CB:** 70. | **SL:** 70. | **CH:** 40. | **CTL:** 40.

Misiorowski has few prospect peers in terms of quality of raw stuff. He also has few peers in terms of wildness. But in a bullpen role, Misiorowski's fastball and breaking stuff will play closer to 80-grade. Including his elite extension, he has the goods develop into an all-star closer.

45. LUKE KEASCHALL
TWINS, 2B/OF

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 40.

The Twins unearthed a gem in the second round of the 2023 draft. Keaschall came out blazing in 2024, hitting .300 with good power, strong bat-to-ball skills and discipline as he reached Double-A. Only an elbow injury that required Tommy John surgery in August slowed his ascent.

46. ALEX FREELAND
DODGERS, SS

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 104 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 55.

No Dodgers prospect took bigger strides than Freeland in 2024. The switch-hitting shortstop rose three levels to Triple-A and plays with a confidence that endears him to scouts. Oh, and Freeland is an above-average hitter with solid power and a strong arm capable of handling shortstop.

47. JOSUE DE PAULA
DODGERS, OF

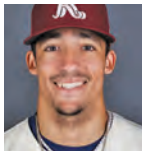
Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 50.

Plus power and advanced swing decisions are De Paula's calling cards. The powerfully built, lefthanded-hitting Dominican corner outfielder has middle-of-the-order lineup upside, but it might have to be at DH unless he dramatically improves his defensive effort and quality.

48. CHASE DeLAUTER
GUARDIANS, OF

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 104 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

The Guardians' 2022 first-rounder offers plenty of production per capita, but availability has been an issue. DeLauter has played 96 games in three pro seasons, missing time with recurring foot injuries—which date back to his college days at James Madison—and introduces risk to a strong hitting foundation.



49. ALEJANDRO ROSARIO
RANGERS, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2026.
Average fastball velocity: 97 mph.
FB: 60. | **CB:** 55. | **SPLT:** 60. | **CTL:** 70.

From fifth round of the 2023 draft coming off a rough draft year at Miami to a breakout pitching prospect of 2024, Rosario led all minor league starters with 33.1 K-BB%. Control is his strongest attribute, but his mid-90s fastball and revitalized splitter both could be plus. Elbow surgery will shelve him until 2026.

50. COOPER PRATT
BREWERS, SS

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 101 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 45. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

The Brewers went more than $1 million over slot to sign Pratt in the sixth round in 2023. A year later, the former Mississippi prep shined at a pair of Class A levels with a strong hitting foundation and a solid glove at shortstop. Look for Pratt to add power as his body and approach mature.

51. ZYHIR HOPE
DODGERS, OF

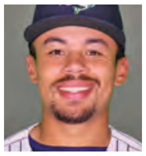
Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 109 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 40.

The Dodgers picked up Hope and Jackson Ferris when they dealt Michael Busch to the Cubs prior to the 2024 season. Hope emerged as a major helium prospect at Low-A and in the Arizona Fall League in 2024 with serious thunder in his bat and a good chance to hit.

52. KYLE TEEL
WHITE SOX, C

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 104 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 55.

The Red Sox dealt Top 100 Prospects Teel and Braden Montgomery to the White Sox in December as the headliners for lefthander Garrett Crochet. Teel is an on-base-oriented, lefthanded-hitting catcher with solid defensive chops and all-around potential.



53. DRAKE BALDWIN
BRAVES, C

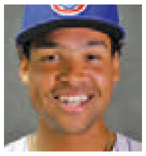
Age: 24. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 106 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 30. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

Baldwin starred in baseball and hockey at his Wisconsin high school before he broke out as a Missouri State junior. The lefthanded-hitting catcher upped the ante at the upper levels in 2024, hitting for power and getting on base while refining his pitch framing.

54. CADE HORTON
CUBS, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
Average exit velocity: 85 mph.
FB: 55. | **SL:** 65. | **CH:** 40. | **CTL:** 50.

A lat injury sabotaged Horton's 2024 season, his first spent exclusively at the upper levels of the minor leagues. The quality of his fastball and slider, not to mention his separating athleticism, point to an upside as a midrotation starter or high-leverage reliever.



55. CAM SMITH
ASTROS, 3B

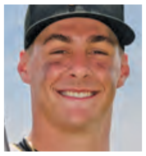
Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 106 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 60.

No 2024 draftee turned in a louder pro debut than Smith, who reached Double-A while mashing seven homers in 32 games and posting a 1.004 OPS. Drafted by the Cubs 14th overall, the Florida State alum has impact hitting potential and was the fulcrum of the Kyle Tucker deal with the Astros.

56. COLE YOUNG
MARINERS, SS

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 101 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 45. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 50.

Young scuffled through the first half of 2024 in the tough hitting environment at Double-A Arkansas. In the second half, he leaned into his bat-to-ball skills and hit .329 in his final 45 games. His table-setting profile and quality glove could earn him a look to play second base in Seattle at some point in 2025.



57. KONNOR GRIFFIN
PIRATES, SS

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2028.
90th percentile exit velocity: N/A.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 70. | **FLD:** 60. | **ARM:** 60.

Baseball America's High School Player of the Year shined as a shortstop and righthander at his Mississippi high school. Drafted ninth overall in 2024, Griffin has raw tools that few players can match. If he can overcome hit tool concerns he has superstar potential with 30-homer, 30-steal upside.

58. JETT WILLIAMS
METS, SS

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 40. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 55.

The 2024 season was largely a lost one for Williams, who had wrist surgery in June and then injured his ankle in the Arizona Fall League. When healthy, he showcased a table-setter profile with on-base skills, plus speed and solid power. He should stick up the middle, but probably more likely at second base or center field.

59. TRAVIS SYKORA
NATIONALS, RHP

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2027.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 65. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 55. | **CTL:** 50.

Sykora pitches with a chip on his shoulder after falling to the third round in 2023. His promising three-pitch mix made short work of Carolina League opponents. Sykora led all Low-A pitchers with 129 strikeouts and then in the playoffs struck out 18 and walked one in 10 shutout innings for champion Fredericksburg.

60. BRYCE RAINER
TIGERS, SS

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2028.
90th percentile exit velocity: N/A.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 70.

A legitimate pro prospect as both a hitter and pitcher, Rainer refined his hit tool as a high school senior to set him up to be the 11th pick in the 2024 draft. The lefthanded-hitting shortstop's big raw power and arm strength give him the inside track to become the Tigers' shortstop of the future.

61. BRANDON SPROAT
METS, RHP

Age: 24. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 96 mph.
FB: 55. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 60. | **CTL:** 45.

Sproat cruised to Triple-A in his first full pro season with dominating stints at High-A and Double-A. Triple-A gave him a chance to build his to-do list as he needs to hit his spots better, but his mid-90s fastball, changeup and slider are all MLB quality if he can spot them better.

62. MOISES BALLESTEROS
CUBS, C

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 30. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 50.

Ballesteros' bat makes him a highly interesting catching prospect, but he does need to prove he can stick behind the plate. The 5-foot-8, 215-pound lefthanded hitter has stayed on top of his conditioning enough to make that a possibility, even if some scouts remain skeptical.

63. JAC CAGLIANONE
ROYALS, 1B

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 109 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 70. | **RUN:** 40. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

Caglianone hits the ball as hard as almost anyone, and he could become the Royals' next great power hitter. For him to get to that potential, he's going to have to continue to work on better pitch recognition and reduce his swings on balls out of the zone.

64. OWEN CAISSIE
CUBS, OF

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 107 mph.
HIT: 45. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 55.

A Padres' draftee out of Canada who became a Cub in the Yu Darvish trade, Caissie draws plenty of walks, hits lots of home runs and also strikes out prodigiously. He improved his strikeout rate in his first taste of Triple-A in 2024, adding to his promise as a young slugger.

15 players who just missed the Top 100

by JOSH NORRIS

We rank prospects to 100 because it's a nice, round number with resonance. But we consider far more than 100 prospects for our Top 100, making the preseason ranking both malleable and volatile.

Plenty of players will graduate during the course of the season, and others will see their stock drop because of injuries or underperformance.

When those changes happen, prospects will enter the list to take their place. Here are 15 of the top contenders to make their way onto the list when it needs to be altered.

Ronny Mauricio, 2B/SS, Mets

When healthy, Mauricio has shown the ability to hit the ball as hard as anyone currently employed by the Mets. Problem is, he missed all of the 2024 season recovering from knee surgery. Mauricio's status for the season is a bit cloudy, and he could require a long ramp-up period at Triple-A, but if he returns with all of his skills intact, he should provide a jolt of power toward the bottom of a dynamic lineup in Queens.

Trey Yesavage, RHP, Blue Jays

The East Carolina alum hasn't made his official pro debut, but his draft season in Greenville provided more than enough ammo to justify a placement on the cusp of the Top 100. His signature moment at ECU was a 7.1-inning gem against Wake Forest ace Chase Burns in the regional round of the NCAA Tournament. The righthander does not have a future plus weapon, though everything but his curveball grades as above-average.

Arjun Nimmala, SS, Blue Jays

Nimmala debuted as the second-youngest player in the Low-A Florida State League and spun his wheels early, earning a demotion to the Florida Complex League. When he returned, he was a new man. Nimmala slashed .265/.331/.564 and walloped 13 home runs from June 3 on in the FSL. Those numbers also included a strikeout rate just shy of 30%. His power numbers were among the best in the league, including a circuit-best .476 slugging percentage.

Edgar Quero, C, White Sox

After a disastrous 2024 season, it's clear that the White Sox have a mountain of work ahead to return to prominence. Through their recent trades, it's clear that they are targeting catcher as a keystone of the revival. Quero joined the system in the summer of 2023 as part of the haul they received from the Angels for righthander Lucas Giolito. The catcher split his 2024 season between Double-A Birmingham and Triple-A Charlotte, posting identical .463 slugging percentages at both stops. He'll compete with Kyle Teel for the title of Chicago's catcher of the future.

James Triantos, 2B, Cubs

Triantos has hit at every stop of his career. His lowest batting average at any affiliate is .272, which came at Low-A

Ronny Mauricio

Jacob Melton

Myrtle Beach in 2022. He split the 2024 season between Double-A and Triple-A and finished with an average of an even .300. All of that contact hasn't come with a lot of impact, and he's hit just 24 home runs over 1,461 minor league plate appearances. Triantos is a smart, above-average runner who's developed into an above-average defender at second base as well. Triantos has a chance to make the big leagues this season.

Jacob Melton, OF, Astros

Melton's profile is driven by the kind of power-speed combination front offices covet. He was one of just 18 minor leaguers with 15 or more home runs and 30 or more stolen bases in 2024, and one of just 11 who spent their entire year at the upper levels. Only Melton's speed grades as a potentially plus tool, but improvements to his batted-ball profile could amplify his power to those levels. His defense is enough to stick in center field but would be a notch better on either corner.

Luis Perales, RHP, Red Sox

Perales has long been one of the more intriguing arms in Boston's system. He'd just begun to put it all together in 2024 when he tore his ulnar collateral ligament and had Tommy John surgery. He made the jump in part by tweaking his pitch mix to add a cutter and turning his slider into a sweeper. Those changes, plus a well-shaped, high-octane fastball could lead to a future in a rotation, though his development is likely on hold until 2026.

Santiago Suarez, RHP, Rays

The lower levels of the Rays' system are bursting with high-upside arms. That group includes Trevor Harrison and Gary Gill Hill, whom Suarez could eventually join in the Top 100. Suarez came to the Rays from the Marlins in an offseason trade in 2022. The righthander relentlessly pounds the strike zone with a four-pitch mix that is amplified by double-plus control. Suarez earns plus grades for his four-seam and cut fastballs and complements the heaters with an average curveball and a fringy split-changeup. In 2025, Suarez, Harrison and Gill Hill should front one of the best rotations in the lower minors.

Chandler Simpson, OF, Rays

Simpson's speed is the best in the minors. He has swiped 198 bases over the last two seasons, including 104 in 2024. That quickness is a crucial part of his offensive game, especially considering he managed just 16 extra-base hits and has 20-grade power. He's a true slash-and-dash player who could fit at the top or bottom of a lineup. Simpson could enhance his profile further by improving his outfield routes and first-step quickness. Doing so would move him from a fringe-average defender in center field into a potentially plus gloveman.

Alfredo Duno, C, Reds

The Reds showed their confidence in Duno by skipping him over the Arizona Complex League and sending him to the Low-A Florida State League, where he was the youngest player on an Opening Day roster. He performed well in 32 games before a broken rib landed him on the injured list for the rest of the season. He re-emerged in instructional league. At his best, Duno's game is based around nearly double-plus power and the potential for average defense behind the plate. Injuries in each of the last two seasons have cost him plenty of reps, however, and the 2025 season will be crucial for his development.

Thomas Saggese, 2B, Cardinals

Saggese came to the Cardinals in 2023 in the trade that made Jordan Montgomery a Ranger. He has a set of potentially average or above-average tools and made his big league debut on Sept. 10. He has solid bat-to-ball skills, but his approach could stand to be less aggressive. His defensive skill set fits best at second base, though he is likely to be a fringe-average defender at the position. Saggese is a big league-ready option and could land in St. Louis on Opening Day.

Orelvis Martinez, 2B, Blue Jays

Martinez's power is his calling card and got him to the big leagues briefly in 2024. The stay lasted only one game before he was suspended for 80 games after testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance. The ban covered the remainder for the regular year. At his peak, Martinez has the potential for plus power and a fringe-average hit tool. He's got above-average arm strength and could be an OK defender at second base. He'll get a crack at the Opening Day lineup with a solid spring training.

Jack Perkins, RHP, Athletics

Perkins might just be the sneakiest pitching prospect in the minor leagues. The Indiana alum missed time early with a lat injury but was excellent at Double-A Midland upon his return. Perkins tweaked his slider to add more sweep, and the results followed. Batters missed the pitch at a rate of nearly 45% in 2024, and both it and his fastball grade as potentially plus offerings. Perkins backs the fastball/slider combo with a future average cutter and a fringy changeup and curveball. His control is fringy as well. If he can bring an offspeed pitch forward a couple of notches, Perkins could fit as a midrotation starter.

Luis Morales, RHP, Athletics

Morales has some of the loudest stuff in the organization, but his 2024 season was muted by a shoulder injury which led to a cautious workload. The Cuban righthander's fastball averaged roughly 97 mph, and he paired the pitch with an improved slider. Those two pitches have plus potential, and his curveball and changeup each grade as at least average. He ties the mix together with an athletic delivery and potentially average control. If he can stay healthy, he has a chance to shoot up the rankings this season.

Brailer Guerrero, OF, Rays

Guerrero's biggest wart so far has been the proverbial sixth tool: health. In two pro seasons, the outfielder has played just 35 games thanks to a shoulder injury that started in the Dominican Summer League in 2023 and reoccurred in the Florida State League in 2024. When he's been on the field, he's been sublime. Guerrero's offensive game should feature plenty of hitting ability and power, and nothing on his scouting card projects as worse than average. To get those gifts to play to their fullest, he needs to stay on the field. ■

TOM DIPACE (MAURICIO), EDDIE KELLY (MELTON)

65. BRAYDEN TAYLOR
RAYS, 3B

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 101 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

The Rays' 2023 first-round pick out of Texas Christian is boringly good and mundanely well-rounded. It's hard to point to any aspect of Taylor's game or tool set that is exceptional, but he does everything well. He should be a long-term regular at second or third base who makes all the routine plays.

66. BRADEN MONTGOMERY
WHITE SOX, OF

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: N/A.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 70.

Drafted by the Red Sox 12th overall in 2024, Montgomery was part of the prospect package sent to the White Sox for Garrett Crochet. Changing the color of his socks gives Montgomery a clear path to being a key part of Chicago's rebuild. His bat and athleticism should help him move quickly through the minors.

67. JARLIN SUSANA
NATIONALS, RHP

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2027.
Average fastball velocity: 100 mph.
FB: 70. | **SL:** 60. | **CH:** 50. | **CTL:** 45.

Susana could give the Nationals one more foundational piece from the 2022 Juan Soto trade. He had struggled as a starter at Low-A, but everything started to click just before midseason in 2024. Susana has a triple-digit fastball and has started to show he knows what to do with it.

68. TINK HENCE
CARDINALS, RHP

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
Average fastball velocity: 94 mph.
FB: 60. | **CB:** 50. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 60. | **CTL:** 55.

Hence's St. Louis arrival was delayed by an injury-plagued 2024 season at Double-A Springfield, but he remains a key part of the Cardinals' short- and long-term futures. If the 6-foot-1 Hence can improve his durability, his repertoire is well-rounded and would play toward the front of a rotation.

69. THAYRON LIRANZO
TIGERS, C

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 108 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 20. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 60.

Amazingly, the Tigers traded big league talent at the 2024 deadline for prospects and still mounted a turnaround that led to a postseason spot. Liranzo, acquired for Jack Flaherty, is one of the biggest rewards. The the well-rounded, switch-hitting catcher joins a deep group of Tigers backstops.

70. JONNY FARMELO
MARINERS, OF

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.
HIT: 45. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 70. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 50.

Farmelo was drafted with the Prospect Promotion Incentive pick the Mariners added when Julio Rodriguez won the 2022 AL Rookie of the Year award. Farmelo should eventually join J-Rod in the Seattle outfield. He suffered an ACL injury in his right knee in Low-A in 2024 but is expected back at full speed in 2025.

#77 MICHAEL ARROYO

PATRICK KROHN/FOUR SEAM IMAGES

71. KEVIN ALCANTARA
CUBS, OF

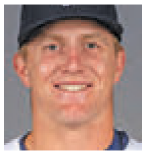
Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 106 mph.
HIT: 45. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 60. | **ARM:** 55.

Acquired from the Yankees in the Anthony Rizzo trade, Alcantara is a James Wood-sized center fielder with above-average defense and power potential. The Kyle Tucker trade likely sends him back to Triple-A for more seasoning, but he has the power and speed to fit in center or right field.

72. STARLYN CABA
MARLINS, SS

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2028.
90th percentile exit velocity: 98 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 45. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 80. | **ARM:** 55.

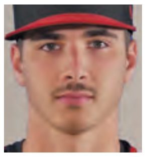
Acquired from the Phillies in the offseason Jesus Luzardo deal, Caba is the best defensive shortstop in the minors. His athleticism, range, hands and feel for the position all draw raves. He's a long way from Miami, because his bat needs a good bit more work than his glove.



73. ZEBBY MATTHEWS
TWINS, RHP

Age: 25. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 96 mph.
FB: 55. | **CB:** 40. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 40. | **CUT:** 55. | **CTL:** 70.

Matthews got a late-season taste of the big leagues when the Twins needed rotation help. He could use a better out pitch, but his control—he walked a minor league-low 1.9% of batters in 2024—command and solid arsenal make him a pretty safe bet to be a No. 4 starter in the major leagues.



74. THOMAS HARRINGTON
PIRATES, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 92 mph.
FB: 55. | **CB:** 50. | **SL:** 55. | **SPL:** 55. | **CUT:** 50. | **CTL:** 70.

Harrington should fit into the Pirates rotation at some point in 2025. He'll slot behind Paul Skenes, Jared Jones and Bubba Chandler, but his well above-average control and varied pitch mix make him a potentially useful No. 4 starter on a team with several frontline power pitchers.

75. BLAKE MITCHELL
ROYALS, C

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 30. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 70.

When the Royals sent Mitchell to Low-A to start the 2024 season, they knew they were asking a lot of him. The lefthanded hitter struggled early, but a tweaked stance helped him blossom into one of the more productive sluggers in the Carolina League. He is a catcher with a first baseman's bat.

76. FRANKLIN ARIAS
RED SOX, SS

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2028.
90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 55.

Arias has filled out and gotten stronger as he's matured, which has helped him transform from a skinny, athletic shortstop to a well-rounded hitter with potentially average power. He dominated at Rookie ball in 2024 and has the skills to stick at shortstop with good footwork and a solid internal clock.

77. MICHAEL ARROYO
MARINERS, 2B

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 45.

Arroyo could become the next Colombian major league star. His 23 home runs in 2024 were tied for most by a teenager in the minors. His bat is more advanced than his glove, but he should be able to stick at second base while hitting for average, getting on base and hitting 15-20 home runs.

78. CADEN DANA
ANGELS, RHP

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 94 mph.
FB: 55. | **CB:** 50. | **SL:** 60. | **CH:** 45. | **CTL:** 50.

The Angels have already gotten Zach Neto and Ben Joyce out of the 2022 draft, and now Dana looks to make a quality draft even better. He became the Angels' youngest pitcher to debut since Frank Tanana in 1973. Dana is not a finished product and needs to keep working on polishing a third pitch.

79. CHRISTIAN MOORE
ANGELS, 2B

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 45.

While most draftees barely play in their first pro year, Moore hit six homers in his first eight pro games while leaping to Double-A. Moore helped power Tennessee to a College World Series title. Now, he's a bat-first second baseman whose power potential gives him a chance to the Angels' next rapid riser.

TOP 100 BY SOURCE

40	HIGH SCHOOL
35	COLLEGE
23	INTERNATIONAL
2	JUNIOR COLLEGE

#85 COLE CARRIGG

BILL MITCHELL

80. TRE' MORGAN
RAYS, 1B

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.
HIT: 65. | **POW:** 40. | **RUN:** 50. | **FLD:** 80. | **ARM:** 60.

Praising a first baseman's defense is usually a backhanded compliment. But Morgan really is a lefthanded-throwing shortstop playing first, and his bat is good enough to make him a well-rounded prospect. He's a .333 career minor league hitter in nearly 500 plate appearances.

81. HESTON KJERSTAD
ORIOLES, OF

Age: 26. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 104 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 60.

The No. 2 pick in the 2020 draft out of Arkansas saw action with the Orioles the last two seasons and showed power and solid hitting ability. Kjerstad will look to earn a full-time role in 2025 and could develop into a slugger with an above-average hit tool.

82. JACKSON FERRIS
DODGERS, LHP

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
Average fastball velocity: 94 mph.
FB: 60. | **CB:** 55. | **SL:** 60. | **CH:** 40. | **CUT:** 50. | **CTL:** 50.

The lefthander had a breakthrough season in his first year in the Dodgers' system after coming over with Zyhir Hope in an offseason trade. Ferris reached Double-A and threw 126.2 innings. He mixes a four-pitch mix led by a plus slider and a fastball that sits 93-95 mph.

83. AJ SMITH-SHAWVER
BRAVES, RHP

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 60. | **CB:** 45. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 50. | **CTL:** 45.

The Braves' top pitching prospect has reached the major leagues in each of the last two seasons. He pairs a mid-90s fastball that has above-average ride with a downer curveball and a much-improved changeup. Smith-Shawver should have a chance to compete for a rotation spot in 2025.

84. DEMETRIO CRISANTES
D-BACKS, 2B

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 103 mph.
HIT: 60. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 45. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 45.

The 2022 seventh-round pick reached Low-A in 2024 and showcased a well-rounded offensive skill set. Crisantes is a career .342 hitter in the minors, and in 2024 he ripped off a 57-game on-base streak to end the season. That's just nine games shy of Mookie Betts' mark for the longest, going back nearly 30 years.

85. COLE CARRIGG
ROCKIES, OF

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 60. | **ARM:** 70.

The Rockies' 2023 supplemental second-round pick is a versatile, athletic player who broke through at the plate at High-A Spokane in 2024. Carrigg is a plus runner with above-average hitting ability and plus or better defensive skills in center field—and also a background at both catcher and shortstop.

TOP 100 PROSPECTS

86. COLBY THOMAS
ATHLETICS, OF

Age: 24. **ETA:** 2025.
90th percentile exit velocity: 107 mph.
HIT: 45. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 60. | **ARM:** 55.

Thomas enjoyed a breakout 2024 season by slugging 31 home runs and reaching Triple-A. He is tooled up with strong outfield defense, plus raw power and average bat-to-ball skills. Thomas boasted some of the best quality of contact in the minor leagues in 2024.

87. XAVIER ISAAC
RAYS, 1B

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 108 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

Few hitters in the minor leagues possess Isaac's power. He hit 18 home runs in 2024 and reached Double-A in his age-20 season. While Isaac showed significantly more swing-and-miss in 2024, his ability to do significant damage on contact makes him one of the game's premier power-hitting prospects.

88. GEORGE LOMBARD JR.
YANKEES, SS

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 55. | **FLD:** 55. | **ARM:** 55.

Despite Lombard's somewhat underwhelming batting line with Low-A Tampa in his first full season, evaluators throughout the game were impressed by the 2023 first-rounder's well-rounded skill set. Lombard has strong on-base skills, projectable power and the ability to stick at shortstop.

89. FELNIN CELESTEN
MARINERS, SS

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2028.
90th percentile exit velocity: 104 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 60. | **ARM:** 60.

A touted international signing out of the Dominican Republic, Celesten has been limited by injuries in his first two pro seasons. When he's on the field, he shows middle-of-the-order upside and smooth shortstop defense. With just 32 professional games under his belt, Celesten will look to break out in 2025.

90. TREVOR HARRISON
RAYS, RHP

Age: 19. **ETA:** 2028.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 60. | **CB:** 55. | **CH:** 60. | **CTL:** 50.

Harrison grew up a Rays fan in the Tampa area and is now the organization's top pitching prospect. He boasts three above-average or better pitches and the 6-foot-4 physicality of a starter. Harrison has been up to 99 mph on his fastball and mixes in a plus changeup and an above-average slider.

91. RALPHY VELAZQUEZ
GUARDIANS, 1B

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 30. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 60.

While he caught in high school, Velazquez played only first base and occasional left field in 2024. His above-average hit tool and plus game power give him a chance to profile at first. Velazquez showed his plus raw power by posting eye-popping exit velocities in his first full professional season.

#92 JESUS BAEZ

92. JESUS BAEZ
METS, 3B

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 55. | **RUN:** 30. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 60.

After two years of strong underlying data but underwhelming performance, Baez broke out in 2024 and reached High-A as a teenager. His combination of above-average contact and power makes him one of the more intriguing bats in the Mets' system. Baez's strong arm and clean infield actions profile best at third base.

93. EDUARDO TAIT
PHILLIES, C

Age: 18. **ETA:** 2028.
90th percentile exit velocity: 104 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 60. | **RUN:** 40. | **FLD:** 45. | **ARM:** 55.

Catchers who can hit are worth their weight in gold. The Phillies believe they may have a potential plus hitting catcher in the lefthanded-batting Tait. The native Panamanian's defense is still a work in progress, but he shows above-average arm strength and will be 18 for most of the 2025 season.

94. GARY GILL HILL
RAYS, RHP

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2028.
Average fastball velocity: 93 mph.
FB: 55. | **SL:** 55. | **CH:** 50. | **CUT:** 50. | **CTL:** 60.

A cold-weather prep arm who popped late in the 2022 draft cycle, Gill Hill announced his presence in 2024 with a strong full season with Low-A Charleston. He shows potential for plus command of his arsenal with an above-average fastball and slider. An above-average athlete, Gill Hill has plenty of starter projection.

95. HARRY FORD
MARINERS, C

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 102 mph.
HIT: 50. | **POW:** 50. | **RUN:** 60. | **FLD:** 40. | **ARM:** 50.

Ford has long been lauded for his plus athleticism for a catcher and outstanding on-base abilities. Despite Ford's smaller frame, many believe he will develop into average game power in time. Ford spent all of 2024 with Double-A Arkansas and should debut in the next two years.

96. JUSTIN CRAWFORD
PHILLIES, OF

Age: 21. **ETA:** 2026.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 55. | **POW:** 40. | **RUN:** 70. | **FLD:** 50. | **ARM:** 50.

Bat-to-ball skills and double-plus speed are Crawford's calling cards, dating back to his high school days in Las Vegas. In many ways he could develop into a similar player as his father Carl. Justin reached the high minors in his age-20 season in 2024, hitting .313 and stealing 42 bases between High-A and Double-A.

97. LAZARO MONTES
MARINERS, OF

Age: 20. **ETA:** 2027.
90th percentile exit velocity: 105 mph.
HIT: 40. | **POW:** 70. | **RUN:** 30. | **FLD:** 30. | **ARM:** 50.

The Mariners have had several hits in the international market of late, and the slugging Montes is one of them. The Cuba native reached High-A and hit 21 home runs and drove in 105 runs across both Class A levels in 2024. Montes shows plus raw power with the exit velocity data to back it.

98. CHASE PETTY
REDS, RHP

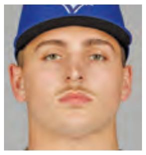
Age: 22. **ETA:** 2025.
Average fastball velocity: 96 mph.
FB: 55. | **SL:** 60. | **CH:** 45. | **CUT:** 60. | **CTL:** 55.

Petty has morphed from a flame-throwing prep to a well-rounded pitcher with a wide arsenal of power pitches. Petty mixes a mid-90s sinker, a four-seamer he can still ramp up to the upper 90s, a slider, cutter and changeup. He reached Triple-A at the end of 2024 and could debut late in 2025.

99. NOLAN McLEAN
METS, RHP

Age: 23. **ETA:** 2026.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 55. | **CB:** 55. | **SL:** 70. | **CH:** 45. | **CTL:** 45.

A former Oklahoma State baseball and football commit, McLean was drafted as one of the top two-way players in the 2023 college class. He dropped hitting in 2024 and showed vast improvement on the mound. He mixes a mid-90s fastball, a double-plus slider, a high-spin curveball and a changeup.



100. RICKY TIEDEMANN
BLUE JAYS, LHP

Age: 22. **ETA:** 2026.
Average fastball velocity: 95 mph.
FB: 60. | **SL:** 65. | **CH:** 55. | **CTL:** 50.

After ascending to the one of the top pitching prospects in the game in 2022, Tiedemann has struggled with health over the last two seasons. He had Tommy John surgery in July 2024 and is expected to miss most—if not all—of the 2025 season. If his strong three-pitch mix returns, he has frontline potential.

LOOKING AHEAD

Six players who could be the No. 1 prospect in 2026

Looking ahead is what we do best at Baseball America.

Our Top 100 Prospects ranking for 2025 spells out which players we think have the most long-term major league potential, but as top prospects graduate to MLB, a new class of minor leaguers waits to take their place.

We think the following six players have the best odds to climb all the way to No. 1 on the 2026 Top 100 Prospects ranking.

#21 SEBASTIAN WALCOTT

Walker Jenkins, OF, Twins

If Jenkins has a healthy 2025 season, he has the talent to become the No. 1 prospect in baseball. He's strong, physical and athletic. His efficient, powerful lefthanded swing lends itself to both contact and impact. In 2024, you saw the bat control and strike-zone discipline that enabled him to barrel the ball against all pitch types and get on base at a high clip. He also missed time due to injury, and when he was on the field, it seemed like those lower half injuries prevented him from fully getting into his power in games. When Jenkins is at full strength, there's big raw power in there, and if he's fully healthy in 2025, we could be talking out the Minor League Player of the Year.

—Ben Badler

Jenkins is an athletic lefthanded hitter with a chance to profile as an all-star right fielder if his power manifests. He has uncanny strike-zone judgment for a teenager with strong bat-to-ball skills and a high walk rate. Jenkins is comfortable letting the ball travel deep and hitting with authority to left field, but to reach his 30-homer upside, he will need to be more selectively aggressive in seeking pull power. He has dealt with injuries that have cost him time in each of the past two seasons, so a full healthy season at Double-A and Triple-A will go a long way toward cementing his prospect status.

—Matt Eddy

Sebastian Walcott, SS, Rangers

Even as Walcott struggled at High-A to begin 2024, scouts urged patience. The tools were there, even if the results weren't just yet. They were right. The 18-year-old busted out in a big way and bashed his way to Double-A by season's end. His career path has been non-traditional. He moved out of the Dominican Summer League in 2023 in his first pro year and lit up domestic competition in the Arizona Complex League before jumping to High-A Hickory by season's end. The aggressive assignments speak to Texas' belief in Walcott's ability to withstand failure and adjust to more advanced competition. There's still some swing-and-miss in his game, but a strong turn at the upper levels could lead him to the highest perch on the 2026 Top 100.

—Josh Norris

Walcott sounds like one of the most physically gifted and purely talented players in the minors. It wasn't uncommon for scouts to bring him up to me out of the blue when they wanted to gush about his athleticism and upside potential—and that's unusual for me since my focus is on the draft.

Walcott has above-average or plus tools across the board. When he starts to add more refinement as a hitter—which he has shown flashes of—he's going to look like a star in the making. He's the player on the Top 100 I am most excited to see in 2025. These are the sorts of athletes you get excited to cover.

—Carlos Collazo

Jesus Made, SS, Brewers

For some, the Made hype machine has reached a breaking point. The general skepticism of Dominican Summer League production has many questioning whether Made's major helium over the past six months is justified. I believe he's the most likely player on our current Top 100 to rank as the No. 1 prospect entering 2026.

Made signed with the Brewers for $950,000 in January 2024, debuting a month after his 17th birthday. He hit .331/.458/.554 with six home runs and 28 stolen bases. His batting line was nearly 70% better than the DSL average despite him being one of the younger players in the league.

Even more exciting than Made's surface production are his batted-ball metrics. He was the only player in the minor leagues in 2024 who was age 25 or younger with this combination: a miss rate below 12%, a chase rate below 15% and a 90th percentile exit velocity of 104 mph or higher.

Made's combination of elite plate skills, actualized power and remaining projection from a switch-hitting middle infielder provides the rarest of prospect profiles. If he can make a Jackson Chourio-like jump to a full-season level in 2025, he's a frontrunner for the top spot in 2026.

—Geoff Pontes

Leodalis De Vries, SS, Padres

Four teenage shortstops—Colt Emerson, Jesus Made, De Vries and Sebastian Walcott—are clustered in the Top 100. My bet is one of those four is No. 1 this time next year. You've heard the case for Walcott and Made already, but why not De Vries? Despite his youth—he was 17 in 2024—and an early shoulder injury, he settled in admirably at Low-A Lake Elsinore. He showed flashes of advanced plate skills and solidly above-average future power projection with high-level athleticism. De Vries may not be quite the pure hitter as Emerson or have quite the same power ceiling as Walcott, but his mixture of tools might end up making him the most well-rounded shortstop of the bunch.

—Mark Chiarelli

Cooper Pratt, SS, Brewers

I'm going to offer a pair of prospects who are further down the current rankings but could rank No. 1 next year if everything breaks right. This is always a fun and difficult challenge, because the players who have already reached Double-A are likely to graduate before next year's Top 100 Prospect ranking comes out, unless they have an injury, which would make them less likely to rank No. 1. Pratt should be in the minors all year.

A best-case scenario for Pratt could see him be one of the most productive hitters in the minors while excelling defensively at shortstop. It's a long shot, but he does have the skills and enough tools to thread that needle to be a top 10 or even No. 1 prospect if everything comes together.

—J.J. Cooper

Zyhir Hope, OF, Dodgers

Similarly, Hope would have to have a Minor League Player of the Year-caliber season to vault to No. 1, but that's not an implausible ask. He has massive power potential with a chance to hit for average as well.

As a bat-first outfielder, Hope would have to vault multiple levels while showing exceptional performance. Hope has the ability to pull that off.

—J.J. Cooper

MIKE JANES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (BAEZ), EDDIE KELLY (WALCOTT)

MLB PREVIEW

YOUTH IS SERVED

It wasn't long ago that Paul Skenes, Bobby Witt Jr., Gunnar Henderson, Elly De La Cruz and so many others headlined the Top 100 Prospects.

But as we approach Opening Day 2025, those players are already being discussed in the same breath as superstars such as Shohei Ohtani, Aaron Judge, Juan Soto and Mookie Betts.

And that youth explosion isn't going to slow down any time soon.

This year's No. 1 prospect is 23-year-old Japanese righthander Roki Sasaki, who will open in the rotation of World Series-champion Dodgers. And others aren't far behind.

From prospect to perennial all-star, the MLB circle of life continues. With our MLB Preview, Baseball America brings you the best bets for this season and beyond.

Pirates ace
Paul Skenes

JULIO AGUILAR/GETTY IMAGES

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BREAKOUT PLAYERS: FIVE HITTERS & FIVE PITCHERS
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BA CRYSTAL**BALL**

The BA editorial staff goes on record with our bold—and not so bold—predictions for the 2025 MLB season. Teams are listed with their BA Grade on the 20-80 scale.

Our nine Crystal Ball prognosticators this year are Ben Badler, Jesús Cano, Mark Chiarelli, Carlos Collazo, J.J. Cooper, Matt Eddy, Josh Norris, Geoff Pontes and Dylan White.

AL EAST		AL CENTRAL		AL WEST	
1. Orioles	60	**1.** Tigers	50	**1.** Rangers	55
2. Yankees	60	**2.** Twins	50	**2.** Astros	55
3. Red Sox	55	**3.** Guardians	50	**3.** Mariners	50
4. Rays	50	**4.** Royals	45	**4.** Athletics	45
5. Blue Jays	50	**5.** White Sox	20	**5.** Angels	40

Wild Cards: Yankees, Red Sox, Astros.
Pennant: Rangers (3), Red Sox (3), Orioles (2) Guardians (1).

NL EAST		NL CENTRAL		NL WEST	
1. Braves	70	**1.** Cubs	55	**1.** Dodgers	80
2. Phillies	60	**2.** Brewers	50	**2.** D-backs	55
3. Mets	60	**3.** Reds	50	**3.** Padres	50
4. Nationals	40	**4.** Pirates	45	**4.** Giants	45
5. Marlins	30	**5.** Cardinals	40	**5.** Rockies	20

Wild Cards: Phillies, Mets, D-backs.
Pennant: Dodgers (5), Braves (1), Brewers (1), D-backs (1), Phillies (1).

WORLD SERIES PREDICTIONS

BEN BADLER
DODGERS defeat **RED SOX**

JESÚS CANO
D-BACKS defeat **ORIOLES**

MARK CHIARELLI
PHILLIES defeat **RANGERS**

CARLOS COLLAZO
GUARDIANS defeat **BREWERS**

J.J. COOPER
DODGERS defeat **RED SOX**

MATT EDDY
RANGERS defeat **BRAVES**

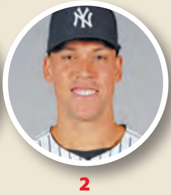
JOSH NORRIS
DODGERS defeat **RED SOX**

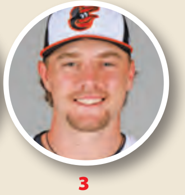
GEOFF PONTES
DODGERS defeat **ORIOLES**

DYLAN WHITE
DODGERS defeat **RANGERS**

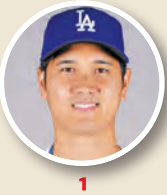
AL MVP

1
Bobby Witt Jr.
SS, Royals


2
Aaron Judge
OF, Yankees


3
Gunnar Henderson
SS, Orioles

NL MVP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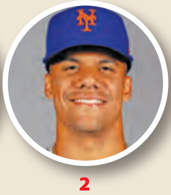
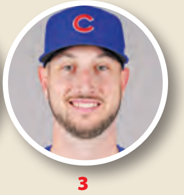
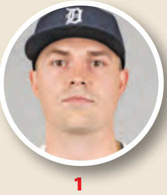
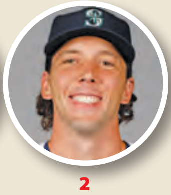
Shohei Ohtani
DH/RHP, Dodgers


2
Juan Soto
OF, Mets


3
Kyle Tucker
OF, Cubs

AL CY YOUNG AWARD

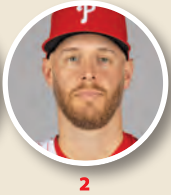

1
Tarik Skubal
LHP, Tigers


2
Logan Gilbert
RHP, Mariners

3
Garrett Crochet
LHP, Red Sox

NL CY YOUNG AWARD

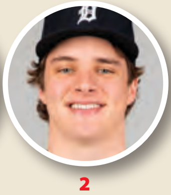
1
Paul Skenes
RHP, Pirates

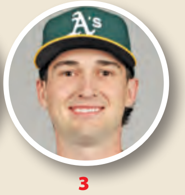

2
Zack Wheeler
RHP, Phillies

3
Logan Webb
RHP, Giants

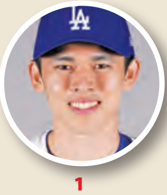
AL ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

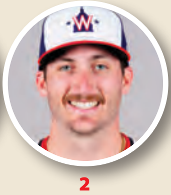
1
Kristian Campbell
OF/2B, Red Sox


2
Jackson Jobe
RHP, Tigers


3
Jacob Wilson
SS, Athletics

NL ROOKIE OF THE YEAR


1
Roki Sasaki
RHP, Dodgers


2
Dylan Crews
OF, Nationals

3
Matt Shaw
3B, Cubs

Gunnar Henderson

SHORTSTOP S

Gunnar Henderson, **Bobby Witt Jr.** and **Elly De La Cruz** form 'The Threequel' at shortstop, evoking past trios and influencing future generations with their power, athleticism and versatility

by JESÚS CANO

Baseball is a game rooted in tradition. Yet over the years, it has seen its fair share of evolution.

On the field, the shortstop position is evolving faster than any other.

But we don't get where we are today without first going back in time more than a quarter century. In the late 1990s, the trio of Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez and Nomar Garciaparra defined the shortstop position through their brilliance on both sides of the ball. Collectively, they set the standard for what a shortstop could be.

Baseball America tabbed Jeter, Rodriguez and Garciaparra the "Holy Trinity." In an August 1999 issue, BA surveyed 50 players, general managers and assistant GMs at that year's All-Star Game in Boston about the trio's best tools and skills.

Jeter led the way with the most first-place votes through the plethora of categories. His career culminated in Cooperstown, one vote shy of Hall of Fame unanimity. Jeter knocked 3,456 hits in his career while leading the Yankees to five World Series championships. Only Omar Vizquel appeared in more career games at shortstop than Jeter.

A-Rod is arguably the most multi-talented player of the draft era. He hit 696 home runs, collected 3,115 hits, stole 329 bases and won two Gold Gloves at shortstop. His link to PEDs and the Biogenesis scandal are the only things keeping him out of Cooperstown.

Garciaparra won two batting titles, including a .372 mark in 2000, and hit as many as 35 homers in a season, though injuries curtailed his effectiveness in his 30s.

Speaking about the influence of the so-called Holy Trinity today, Guardians GM Chris Antonetti said: "It could just be a natural ebb and flow with the talent at the position.

"If you look back over the last few decades, there have been periods of time where we've had generational shortstops all contributing at the same time.

MILESTONEWATCH

MIKE TROUT
22 HR FROM 400

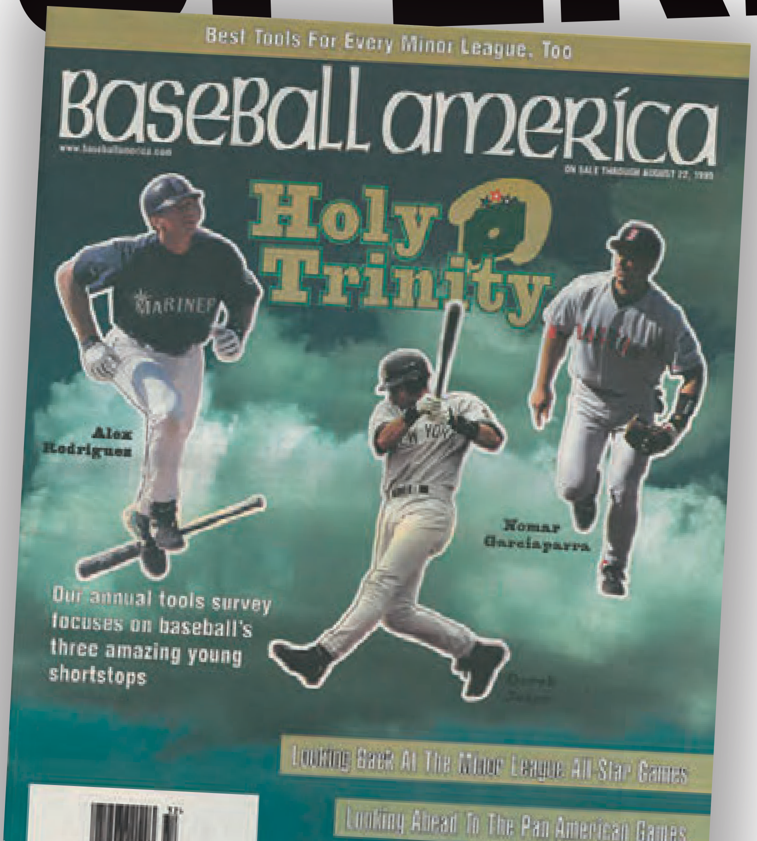
Willie, Mickey and the Duke all hit 400 or more home runs as era-defining center fielders. Trout can clear 400 homers in 2025 and join that trio along with Griffey, Beltran, Andruw and Dawson.

RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Bobby Witt Jr.

Elly De La Cruz

SUPERNOVAS



Best Tools For Every Minor League, Too

Baseball America

www.baseballamerica.com

ON SALE THROUGH AUGUST 22, 1999

Holy Trinity

Alex Rodriguez

Nomar Garciaparra

Derek Jeter

Our annual tools survey focuses on baseball's three amazing young shortstops

Looking Back At The Minor League All-Star Games

Looking Ahead To The Pan American Games

If in 1999 we were talking about the Holy Trinity. Today, we are experiencing The Threequel.

Bobby Witt Jr., Gunnar Henderson and Elly De La Cruz are shaking up the shortstop position with their athleticism, power and defensive excellence. The trio has a chance to rival peak Jeter, Rodriguez and Garciaparra from nearly three decades ago.

Witt's arrival in Kansas City as a 2022 rookie heralds the starting point for The Threequel. Henderson debuted late that season for the Orioles and won 2023 AL Rookie of the Year. De La Cruz joined the Reds midstream in 2023, appearing in 98 games.

"I've played shortstop ever since I can remember," Witt said. "I always wanted to be a shortstop, because I was able to help the team win offensively, defensively and every day."

Witt may have the best mix of power, speed, hitting ability, defensive range and arm

"When you go back to Jeter, Garciaparra and Rodriguez, there were lots of really good shortstops then. Maybe there was a bit of an ebb. And I think what we've now seen over the last six to seven years, that maybe there's a resurgence in the position."

Antonetti knows a thing or two about talented shortstops. Cleveland debuted Francisco Lindor as its shortstop in 2015. He would have won American League Rookie of the Year if not for Carlos Correa, another brilliant young shortstop who debuted that same season.

The Dodgers' Corey Seager followed Lindor and Correa in 2016, winning National League Rookie of the Year. The group formed a second power trio of all-time young shortstop talent blossoming at once.

This story, however, isn't a survey or a retrospective. It's a story about the supernova of talent taking over the shortstop position in MLB today.

KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES(HENDERSON), JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES (WITT JR.), EMILEE CHINN/GETTY IMAGES (DE LA CRUZ) strength since, well, A-Rod. Witt turns 25 years old this season and already has two 30-30 seasons, another 20-20 season, a Gold Glove and a runner-up finish for AL MVP last year.

He has quickly developed into one of the most dominant players in baseball. According to FanGraphs.com, Witt has generated 18.5 WAR, a total that trails only Aaron Judge, Lindor, Shohei Ohtani and Freddie Freeman since his 2022 debut.

Witt's ascendance is even more impressive in light of the lost 2020 minor league season. The Royals drafted him second overall in 2019, but he saw no official game action in 2020 before winning Minor League Player of the Year honors in 2021 and quickly adapting to MLB a year after that.

Witt's 30-30 seasons are indicative of a new type of headlining shortstop: one who combines traditional skills with a new-age power and speed into a star-making mix.

"It's just how the game is evolving," Witt said. "Guys are getting stronger. They're not trying to hit homers, it's just part of it now. Naturally, you try to hit line drives. For me, I try to hit the ball hard and put good swings on it. Home runs are sometimes mistakes."

Playing at Colleyville Heritage High outside Dallas, Witt was a known commodity who had been heralded as top prospect for years. His father of the same name was a 16-year MLB veteran righthander whom the Rangers drafted No. 3 overall in 1985.

Witt's draft scouting report in 2019 read in part: "If he is even a .230 or .240 hitter, he should have a lengthy big league career because of his defensive ability at shortstop, speed and power. If he proves to be an average or better hitter, he could become a franchise-caliber player."

As Witt has developed into a superstar, the Royals have been transformed by his play. His MVP-caliber season, along with top-five Cy Young Award finishes from Seth Lugo and Cole Ragans, lifted the Royals to 86 wins and an AL wild card last season after seven straight losing seasons.

It's a trend Royals GM J.J. Picollo has seen in modern day shortstops.

"Kids now train differently when they come into the system, maybe a little bit more advanced than they were 10 to 15 years ago," Picollo said. "They're more athletic. They understand what it takes to play that position—the flexibility, the footwork, the athleticism and the movement patterns they train for that."

Some kids train differently, but others are just built differently.

De La Cruz stands at 6-foot-5 and has the combination of speed, strength and agility that almost seems otherworldly. It almost looks like he belongs on a football field, rather than a baseball diamond—and maybe if he grew up in the U.S. rather than the Dominican Republic that would have been the case.

The 23-year-old switch-hitter's ability to produce power, steal bases and play elite defense makes him a rare talent in the modern game. De La Cruz is one of the most electrifying players, but that outcome would not have been obvious when the Reds first scouted him.

In fact, De La Cruz wasn't initially on the Reds' radar in the 2018 international class. He happened to be working out at the El Niche Baseball Academy in Santo Domingo when the Reds arrived to scout another prospect. A 16-year-old De La Cruz was there, too, already standing 6 feet tall, but without any semblance of the sinewy muscle that has helped fuel his rise.

The Reds were intrigued. After one workout, they saw enough and signed De La Cruz for $65,000.

Quickly, they realized they had uncovered a gem.

De La Cruz debuted in the Dominican Summer League in 2019, then lost the 2020 season to the pandemic.

Once play returned, he made the sport snap to attention. Evaluators were awestruck. His pyrotechnics on the field upstaged fireworks shows across the minor leagues.

In 2022, a near 30-50 campaign helped him finish runner-up to Henderson as Minor League Player of the Year.

In two seasons in Cincinnati, De La Cruz has hit .250/.324/.447 with 38 home runs. Last year he made his first all-star team and led MLB with 67 stolen bases—but also 218 strikeouts. Continued improvement to his contact rate and OBP are required, but he has the athleticism to adapt and meet the challenge.

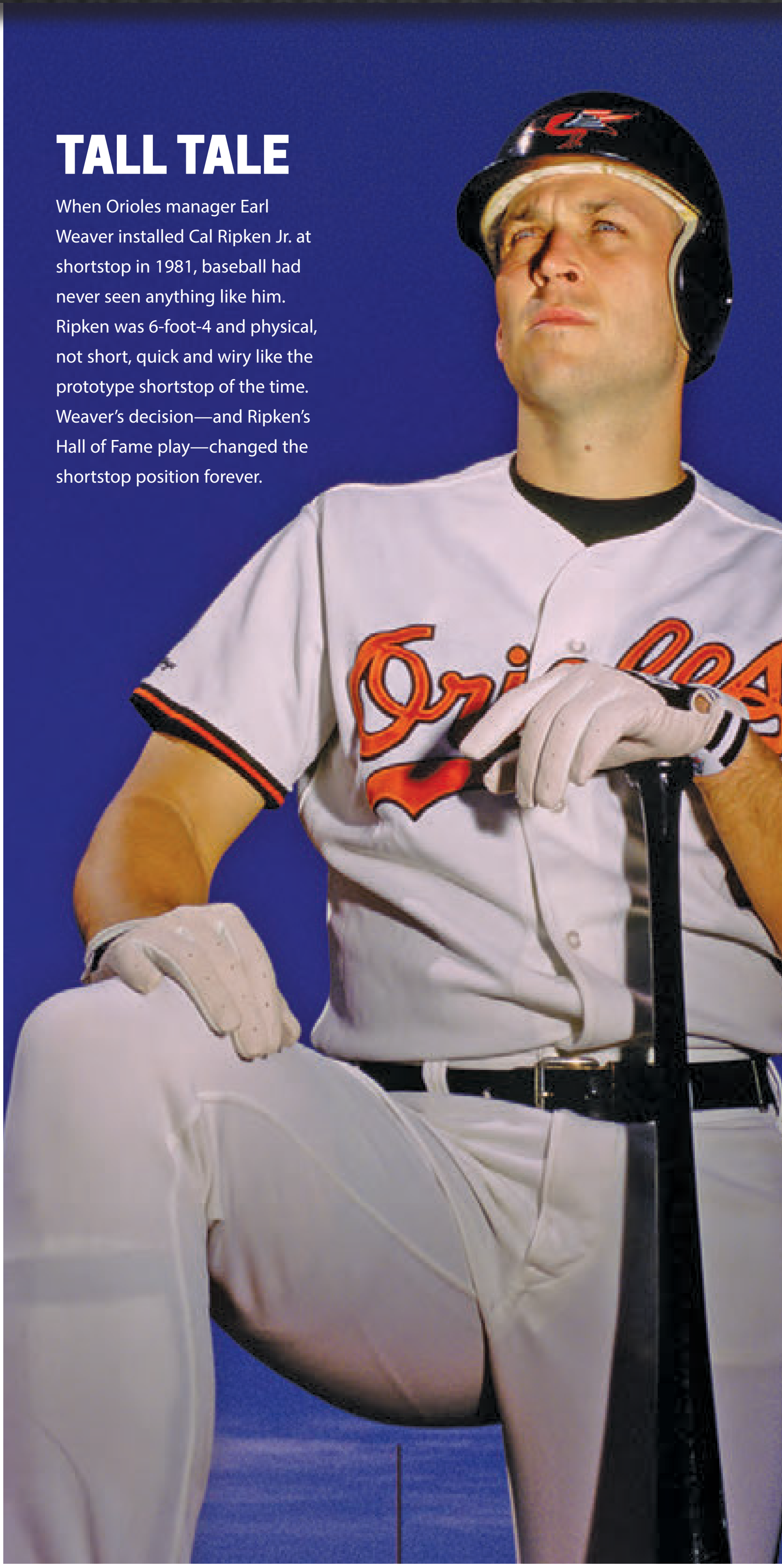
"Athletes continue to get better and evolve," Reds GM Nick Krall said. "And Elly is one of the best ones I've ever seen. And I think the sky's the limit for him."

Through three major league seasons, Henderson has demonstrated a high talent level with the Orioles, winning AL Rookie of the Year in 2023 and then finishing fourth in the MVP race last season.

Known for his all-around game, Henderson combines impressive power and hitting ability with solid defense and has one of the strongest infield arms in the game. Last season he flirted with 40 homers while setting additional career highs with 21 stolen bases and 78 walks. He made his first all-star team.

Standing at 6-foot-3, Henderson's solid frame gives him the physicality to succeed at the plate, while his agility allows him to cover significant ground defensively. His quick reflexes and 70-grade arm allow him to play deeper than other shortstops as needed.

While Henderson is less likely than Witt or De La Cruz to win a Gold Glove, his ability to impact the game both offensively and defensively makes him a game-changer and a crucial asset to the Orioles, who have perhaps the most exciting young lineup in the game.



TALL TALE

When Orioles manager Earl Weaver installed Cal Ripken Jr. at shortstop in 1981, baseball had never seen anything like him. Ripken was 6-foot-4 and physical, not short, quick and wiry like the prototype shortstop of the time. Weaver's decision—and Ripken's Hall of Fame play—changed the shortstop position forever.

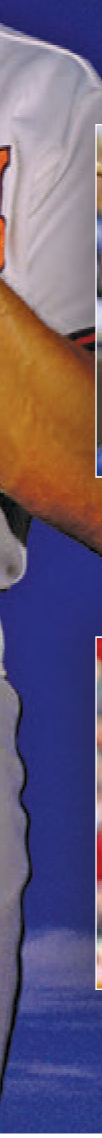
MILESTONEWATCH

LUKE HALES/GETTY IMAGES

FRANCISCO LINDOR

27 HR FROM 275

A milestone of 275 may seem unusual, but for Lindor it represents rare air. Just four primary shortstops have cleared that bar: Alex Rodriguez, Ernie Banks, Cal Ripken Jr. and Miguel Tejada.



Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez and Nomar Garciaparra—the original Holy Trinity of shortstops—all finished top 10 in American League MVP voting in 1998. Garciaparra was runner-up with a career-high 35 home runs. Jeter placed third, hitting .324 for the 114-win Yankees. Rodriguez paired 42 homers with 46 steals as a 22-year-old but finished ninth. **TOTAL 1998 bWAR: 23.1**

Twenty years after the Holy Trinity, a new crop of shortstops entered full bloom. Corey Seager, Carlos Correa and Francisco Lindor emerged as the top trio of a group that also included Xander Bogaerts and Trevor Story. In 2017, Lindor clicked for his first of five 30-homer seasons—and counting?—while Seager's Dodgers and Correa's Astros met in the World Series. **TOTAL 2017 bWAR: 17.7**

Shortstops Elly De La Cruz, Gunnar Henderson and Bobby Witt Jr. showed what they're capable of in 2024, each finishing top 10 in his league's MVP race. Witt finished runner-up to a historic Aaron Judge season in the American League, with Henderson placing fourth. De La Cruz popped 25 homers and led MLB with 67 steals in his first full season. **TOTAL 2024 bWAR: 23.7**

In his first draft as president of baseball operations for the Orioles, Mike Elias selected Henderson at the top of the second round in 2019 out of his Alabama high school. Adley Rutschman was the first overall pick, making the Orioles' 2019 draft haul an all-timer.

Henderson and Witt were drafted a round apart, but they have arrived at the same point as two of the American League's finest young players.

Angels manager Ron Washington is renowned as one of the best infield coaches in the business. He helped mold Marcus Semien into a big league shortstop-turned-Gold Glove second baseman.

He has seen every MLB infielder up close for the past 50 years. He sees something special in Henderson, Witt and De La Cruz.

"You have to be a smart and mature player to be up the middle at shortstop," Washington said. "You have to be that way because you're the lead on the infield.

"They're hitters, too. You don't just have one who's a slouch. And what I mean by that is: You don't have one that focuses on defense and speed. A majority of them can play every part of the game. That is the (type of) athletes who are coming out now."

The shift at shortstop is a reflection of the changes in baseball. There is an increased focus on power, athleticism and versatility.

The shortstops of yesteryear, like Jeter and Garciaparra, were known for their ability to make the routine plays and hit for average with occasional power. Today's shortstops are expected to be multi-dimensional threats.

"I think the shortstop position has become a lot more physical," Athletics manager Mark Kotsay said. "You look at the great shortstops like Omar Vizquel and Ozzie Smith. Those guys were super, ultra-athletic and maybe not as physical.

"This new generation of players has both. They're obviously equally as talented defensively, but they have the ability to really do damage offensively."

Teams today look for shortstops who can not only handle the glove but also contribute significantly to the offense. In the past, it may have been more about defensive consistency, but today's shortstop is a dynamic athlete who can impact the team in a variety of ways.

"The shortstop is typically one of the best athletes on the field," Guardians manager Stephen Vogt said. "Defense and athleticism and hands, and when you have that, you can go produce.

"And we have some of the best shortstops to ever play the game right now."

As we examine the shortstop position, it's clear that it is evolving in exciting ways.

Cal Ripken Jr. set the standard for the "big" shortstop more than 40 years ago. At 6-foot-4, 200 pounds, his dimensions were unheard of for a shortstop when he debuted in 1981. Ripken's success paved the way for Jeter, Rodriguez and Garciaparra and later for Lindor and, especially, the more physical Correa and Seager.

Today, Witt, Henderson and De La Cruz set the standard and are influencing the next wave of players.

Future shortstops will undoubtedly be athletes, but it's also true that subsequent generations of players will continue to change the way the game is played.

The legacy of the old guard will always be honored, but the future is bright for the next wave of shortstop superstars.

And it begins with the The Threequel of Witt, Henderson and De La Cruz. ■

RON VESELY/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES (RIPKEN), FOCUS ON SPORT/GETTY IMAGES (JETER, RODRIGUEZ, GARCIAPARRA), MARK CUNNINGHAM/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES (CORREA), DENIS POROY/GETTY IMAGES (SEAGER), LEON HALIP/GETTY IMAGES (LINDOR), BEN JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES (DE LA CRUZ), LUKE HALES/GETTY IMAGES (HENDERSON), ED ZURGA/GETTY IMAGES (WITT JR.)

POWER RANKINGS

Shohei Ohtani

In the current MLB postseason format, an equal number of division winners and wild cards qualify for the tournament. That fact compels us to take a holistic view of team quality, rather than guessing which teams will win their divisions or qualify for wild cards.

The end result is the MLB Power Ranking.

For each team we present:

- A summary of offseason transactions, core players and key rookies.
- An overall BA Grade on the 20-80 scouting scale. Consider teams at the same tier to be roughly equivalent in quality—at least in our eyes.
- Key hitters and pitchers, along with a BA Grade to express expected 2025 value. Key players are simply those projected to be in the primary lineup, in the rotation—including a sixth starter for depth—or top leverage relievers.

Roster Resource was a primary source for hitting and pitching alignments, with tweaks made to reflect the reasonable best version of each team.

Power ranking determined by BA editorial staff.

All text by Matt Eddy.

#1 DODGERS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 80

The Dodgers return **Shohei Ohtani**, **Mookie Betts** and **Freddie Freeman** atop the lineup, and they reinforced that all-time core by importing **Michael Conforto** and re-signing **Teoscar Hernandez**. Los Angeles' primary offseason moves were directed at strengthening the pitching staff, including the additions of **Blake Snell** and **Roki Sasaki** in the rotation and **Tanner Scott** and **Kirby Yates** in the bullpen.

Next First-Time All-Star: Righthander **Yoshinobu Yamamoto** signed for $325 million, the most ever for a pitcher, and flashed all-star upside as a rookie in 2024.

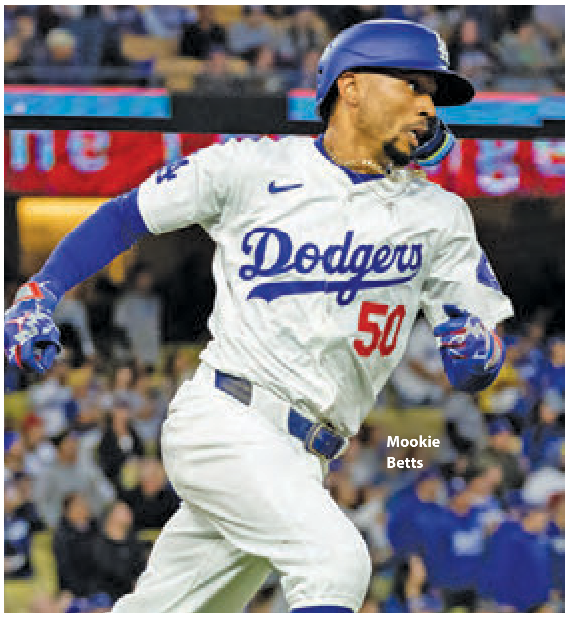
Key Rookies: The 23-year-old Sasaki comes to MLB ready to win and is the favorite to win NL Rookie of the Year. Top position prospect **Dalton Rushing** could hit his way into the picture.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
DH	Shohei Ohtani	80
SS	Mookie Betts	70
1B	Freddie Freeman	65
RF	Teoscar Hernandez	55
3B	Max Muncy	55
C	Will Smith	60
LF	Michael Conforto	50
CF	Tommy Edman	50
2B	Hyeseong Kim	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Shohei Ohtani	60
SP	Yoshinobu Yamamoto	60
SP	Blake Snell	60
SP	Tyler Glasnow	60
SP	Roki Sasaki	55
SP	Tony Gonsolin	45
CL	Tanner Scott	45
RP	Kirby Yates	45
RP	Blake Treinen	45



Mookie Betts

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #3

Trades have thinned the Dodgers somewhat, but the top of the crop is plenty strong and got better after landing No. 1 overall prospect **Roki Sasaki**. **Dalton Rushing** and **Alex Freeland** otherwise lead the way ahead of a trio of young, interesting outfielders in the lower levels: **Josue De Paula**, **Zyhir Hope** and **Eduardo Quintero**.

Top Prospect: Roki Sasaki, RHP

#2 BRAVES

OVERALL BA GRADE: 70

Virtually every Braves regular missed time with injuries last season, which helps explain how the team lost nearly 250 runs from its 2023 total. **Matt Olson**, **Austin Riley** and **Michael Harris II** power an offense with strong supporting players, including newcomer **Jurickson Profar**, as it awaits the return of **Ronald Acuña Jr.** from his second ACL reconstruction. The Braves need young arms, such as **Spencer Schwellenbach**, **Grant Holmes** or **Ian Anderson**, to step up after losing free agents **Max Fried** and **Charlie Morton**.

Next First-Time All-Star: Either Harris or Schwellenbach fits the bill.

Key Rookies: The rotation departures create an opportunity for **AJ Smith-Shawver** to claim a spot, while the departure of second catcher Travis d'Arnaud—and spring injury to Sean Murphy—should lead to a large role for top prospect **Drake Baldwin**.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Ronald Acuña Jr.	70
3B	Austin Riley	65
1B	Matt Olson	60
DH	Marcell Ozuna	55
CF	Michael Harris II	60
2B	Ozzie Albies	55
C	Sean Murphy	55
LF	Jurickson Profar	45
SS	Orlando Arcia	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Chris Sale	60
SP	Spencer Strider	55
SP	Reynaldo Lopez	55
SP	Spencer Schwellenbach	55
SP	Grant Holmes	45
SP	AJ Smith-Shawver	45
CL	Raisel Iglesias	45
RP	Pierce Johnson	40
RP	Aaron Bummer	40

Ronald Acuña Jr.

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #28

The Braves' system is headlined by a strong 1-2 punch with catcher **Drake Baldwin** and righthander **AJ Smith-Shawver**, but other prospects at the top are either far away, have limited upside or come with plenty of injury risk. The system has plenty of pitching depth, but impact hitters are hard to come by.

Top Prospect: Drake Baldwin, C

TOM DIPACE (OHTANI), GINA FERAZZI / LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES (BETTS), RICH VON BIBERSTEIN/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES (ACUÑA JR.)

#3 PHILLIES

OVERALL BA GRADE: 60

The Phillies added **Jesus Luzardo** to the rotation in a trade with the Marlins and signed free agent **Max Kepler** for the outfield in an otherwise quiet offseason. The top half of the roster remains strong, with **Bryce Harper**, **Trea Turner** and **Kyle Schwarber** leading the offense and **Zack Wheeler**, **Aaron Nola** and **Cristopher Sanchez** centering the rotation. Free agent **Jordan Romano** will attempt to lock down the closer role.

Next First-Time All-Star: Center fielder **Brandon Marsh** or second baseman **Bryson Stott** could ride a big first half to the All-Star Game.

Key Rookie: The Phillies' X-factor is **Andrew Painter**, the ultra-talented 22-year-old righthander who missed the last two seasons but has front-of-rotation upside.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SS	Trea Turner	65
1B	Bryce Harper	65
3B	Alec Bohm	50
DH	Kyle Schwarber	55
RF	Nick Castellanos	50
LF	Max Kepler	45
C	J.T. Realmuto	50
2B	Bryson Stott	50
CF	Brandon Marsh	50

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Zack Wheeler	70
SP	Cristopher Sanchez	60
SP	Aaron Nola	60
SP	Ranger Suarez	55
SP	Jesus Luzardo	50
SP	Andrew Painter	50
CL	Jordan Romano	45
RP	Matt Strahm	45
RP	Orion Kerkering	45

Bryce Harper

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #20

Even after two years away, **Andrew Painter** remains one of the best overall pitching prospects. He leads a strong top end that also includes shortstop **Aidan Miller** and catcher **Eduardo Tait**. There's balance up and down the organization even after trades jettisoned **Starlyn Caba**, **Sam Aldegheri** and **George Klassen**.

Top Prospect: Andrew Painter, RHP

#4 METS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 60

Juan Soto's $765 million deal headlined the Mets' offseason, but New York stayed busy all winter by re-signing **Pete Alonso** and **Sean Manaea** while adding starters **Clay Holmes** and **Frankie Montas** plus reliever **A.J. Minter**. Steps forward from **Francisco Alvarez** and repeats from **Francisco Lindor** and **Mark Vientos** will make the Mets one of the better run-scoring units. Run prevention from a rotation full of No. 3 and 4 starters will be key.

Next First-Time All-Star: A big first half from Vientos could do the trick. **Brandon Nimmo** has a career 126 OPS+ and zero all-star appearances.

Key Rookies: Luisangel Acuña and **Ronny Mauricio** are versatile infielders who could factor during the season, while righthanders **Brandon Sproat** and **Nolan McLean** could force the issue.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SS	Francisco Lindor	70
RF	Juan Soto	75
1B	Pete Alonso	55
LF	Brandon Nimmo	50
3B	Mark Vientos	55
DH	Jesse Winker	45
C	Francisco Alvarez	50
2B	Jeff McNeil	45
CF	Jose Siri	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Sean Manaea	55
SP	Kodai Senga	55
SP	Clay Holmes	50
SP	David Peterson	50
SP	Frankie Montas	45
SP	Paul Blackburn	45
CL	Edwin Diaz	50
RP	A.J. Minter	45
RP	Reed Garrett	40

Juan Soto

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #12

Many of the Mets' top position prospects—**Jett Williams**, **Jesus Baez**, **Ronny Mauricio**—missed time with injuries in 2024, but a strength-in-numbers farm system pushes New York toward the middle of the talent pack. College pitcher draftees **Brandon Sproat**, **Nolan McLean** and **Blade Tidwell** are on the cusp of MLB.

Top Prospect: Jett Williams, SS

#5 ORIOLES

OVERALL BA GRADE: 60

The postseason didn't go how Baltimore wanted the past two years, but it returns a lean, mean lineup anchored by **Gunnar Henderson** and **Adley Rutschman**. **Jordan Westburg** and **Colton Cowser** stepped forward in 2024, while free agent signing **Tyler O'Neill** provides righthanded presence. The rotation lost Corbin Burnes but gained graybeard **Charlie Morton** and Japanese import **Tomoyuki Sugano**. All-star closer **Felix Bautista** returns.

Next First-Time All-Star: Cowser or starters **Zach Eflin** or **Grayson Rodriguez** are all good candidates.

Key Rookies: Sugano is a classic command-and-control righthander who can still be effective at age 35. Third baseman **Coby Mayo** has big righthanded power but needs an opening and must answer defensive questions.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SS	Gunnar Henderson	75
C	Adley Rutschman	65
CF	Cedric Mullins	50
3B	Jordan Westburg	55
RF	Colton Cowser	50
LF	Tyler O'Neill	50
DH	Ryan O'Hearn	45
1B	Ryan Mountcastle	50
2B	Jackson Holliday	50

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Zach Eflin	55
SP	Grayson Rodriguez	55
SP	Charlie Morton	45
SP	Dean Kremer	45
SP	Tomoyuki Sugano	45
SP	Albert Suarez	40
CL	Felix Bautista	45
RP	Keegan Akin	45
RP	Andrew Kittredge	40

Gunnar Henderson

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #17

The Orioles no longer have the game's top farm system after graduating the likes of Gunnar Henderson, Adley Rutschman, Jordan Westburg, Colton Cowser and Jackson Holliday. **Samuel Basallo** and **Coby Mayo** still offer promise, but Baltimore must develop extremely well to rebuild some of the depth lost in trades.

Top Prospect: Samuel Basallo, C

MEGAN BRIGGS/GETTY IMAGES (RUTSCHMAN), HEATHER BARRY/GETTY IMAGES (HARPER), ALEJANDRA VILLA LOARCA/NEWSDAY RM VIA GETTY IMAGES (SOTO), THOMAS A. FERRARA/NEWSDAY RM VIA GETTY IMAGES (JUDGE), RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES (HENDERSON)

MILESTONEWATCH

DENIS POROY/GETTY IMAGES

MANNY MACHADO

9 R FROM 1,000
8 HR FROM 350

Manny Machado passed 1,000 career RBIs last season. Now he has 1,000 runs and 2,000 hits in his sights. With a typical season, he will eclipse 350 career home runs.

Adley Rutschman

#6 YANKEES

OVERALL BA GRADE: 60

Losing **Juan Soto** to their New York rivals hurts, but the Yankees still have two-time MVP **Aaron Judge** and added former MVPs **Cody Bellinger** and **Paul Goldschmidt** to a core that already included **Jazz Chisholm Jr**. Free agent signee **Max Fried** joins **Carlos Rodon** atop a rotation that figures to be without **Gerrit Cole** and **Luis Gil** for an extended spell, while **Devin Williams** becomes the latest elite Yankees closer.

Next First-Time All-Star: Shortstop **Anthony Volpe** and catcher **Austin Wells** are up-the-middle homegrown standouts, while righthander Gil, the reigning American League Rookie of the Year, will miss at least three months with a lat strain.
Key Rookie: If he hits, top prospect **Jasson Dominguez** has a chance to lock down playing time in left field.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
C	Austin Wells	55
RF	Aaron Judge	80
CF	Cody Bellinger	50
1B	Paul Goldschmidt	50
2B	Jazz Chisholm Jr.	60
SS	Anthony Volpe	55
LF	Jasson Dominguez	45
DH	Ben Rice	45
3B	Oswaldo Cabrera	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Max Fried	60
SP	Carlos Rodon	55
SP	Clarke Schmidt	50
SP	Marcus Stroman	45
SP	Will Warren	45
SP	Luis Gil	50
CL	Devin Williams	50
RP	Luke Weaver	45
RP	Ian Hamilton	40

Aaron Judge

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #25

Jasson Dominguez is a clear No. 1 in the system, which is going to need a serious rebound after injuries and underperformance abounded in 2024. **George Lombard Jr.** showed off a slick shortstop glove, while the 2024 draft injected the system with a host of physical college arms, led by **Ben Hess** and **Bryce Cunningham**.
Top Prospect: Jasson Dominguez, OF

#7 D-BACKS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 55

The D-backs outscored every team in MLB last season but fell short of a wild card via tiebreaker. They swapped **Christian Walker** for **Josh Naylor** at first base to team with **Corbin Carroll** and **Ketel Marte** atop the lineup. Free agent splurge **Corbin Burnes** anchors a deep rotation, while power-armed reliever **Justin Martinez** has a chance to lock down the closer's role.

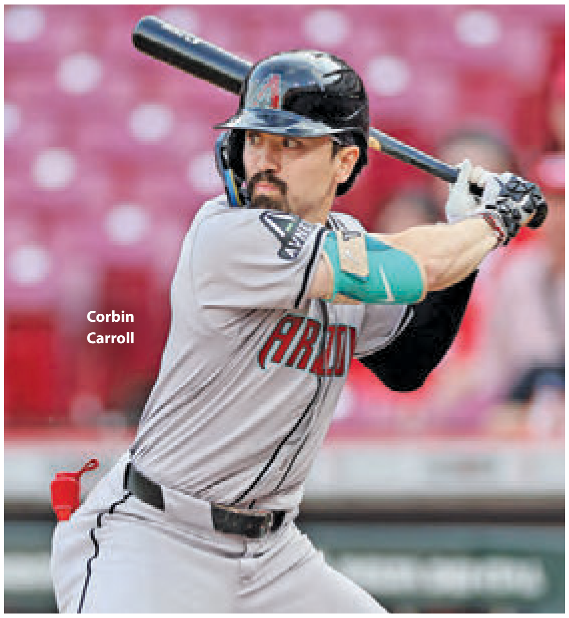
Next First-Time All-Star: Catcher **Gabriel Moreno** could make noise with a healthy season. Martinez is young but highly talented.
Key Rookies: Arizona has a fairly set configuration, but opportunities for young players always arise. The most talented ones with MLB experience are shortstop **Jordan Lawlar**, who mostly just needs to stay healthy, and righthander **Yilber Diaz**, who broke out at the upper levels last season.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Corbin Carroll	65
2B	Ketel Marte	65
1B	Josh Naylor	55
LF	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	45
CF	Jake McCarthy	45
3B	Eugenio Suarez	50
DH	Pavin Smith	45
C	Gabriel Moreno	60
SS	Geraldo Perdomo	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Corbin Burnes	65
SP	Zac Gallen	55
SP	Merrill Kelly	50
SP	Eduardo Rodriguez	45
SP	Brandon Pfaadt	50
SP	Jordan Montgomery	45
CL	Justin Martinez	45
RP	A.J. Puk	45
RP	Kevin Ginkel	40


Corbin Carroll

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #22

Shortstop **Jordan Lawlar** would have graduated by now if not for a string of injuries. He just needs a year of health to take the next step. Behind him, the system has had solid success stories—**Demetrio Crisantes** and **Yilber Diaz**—but the struggles of first-rounders **Druw Jones** and **Tommy Troy** hurt the top tier.
Top Prospect: Jordan Lawlar, SS

#8 RED SOX

OVERALL BA GRADE: 55

The Red Sox attacked their weaknesses in the offseason. First, they dipped into their prospect depth to trade for lefthander **Garrett Crochet** and later signed free agent **Alex Bregman** for his strong righthanded bat and overall presence. Imports **Walker Buehler** and **Aroldis Chapman** further enhance pitching depth. **Jarren Duran**, **Rafael Devers** and **Triston Casas** form a strong lineup core, while the rotation is stocked with interesting arms such as **Tanner Houck**, **Lucas Giolito** and **Brayan Bello**.

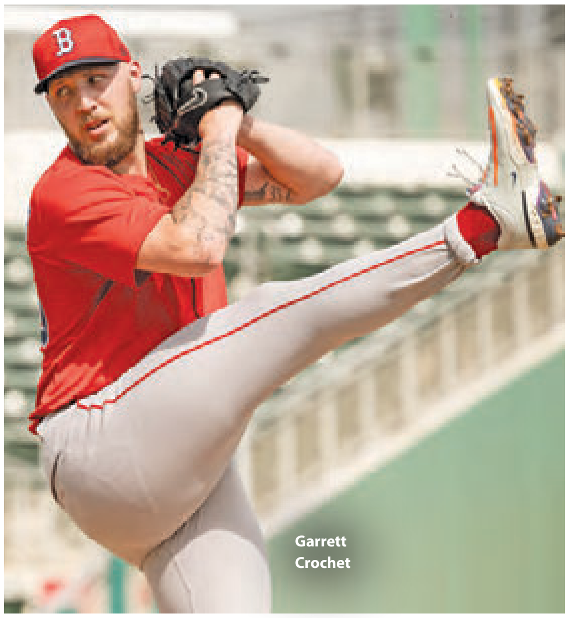
Next First-Time All-Star: Most likely Casas, but don't count out the two potential rookie standouts below.
Key Rookies: A strong Boston lineup stands to be enhanced by second baseman **Kristian Campbell** and outfielder **Roman Anthony** when they're ready this season.

KEY LINEUP

Pos	Player	BA Grade
LF	Jarren Duran	60
DH	Rafael Devers	60
3B	Alex Bregman	60
1B	Triston Casas	50
SS	Trevor Story	45
RF	Wilyer Abreu	50
2B	Kristian Campbell	50
C	Connor Wong	45
CF	Ceddanne Rafaela	45

KEY ROTATION

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Garrett Crochet	65
SP	Tanner Houck	55
SP	Walker Buehler	50
SP	Lucas Giolito	50
SP	Brayan Bello	50
SP	Kutter Crawford	45
CL	Aroldis Chapman	45
RP	Liam Hendriks	45
RP	Garrett Whitlock	45


Garrett Crochet

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #1

The Red Sox have returned to the top of the farm system rankings, even after dealing four prospects to the White Sox to bring Garrett Crochet to Boston. No other organization can match the trio of **Roman Anthony**, **Kristian Campbell** and **Marcelo Mayer**, and Boston's pitching depth has improved as well.
Top Prospect: Roman Anthony, OF

Alex Bregman

MILESTONEWATCH

BRYCE HARPER

24 RBIs FROM 1,000
14 HR FROM 350

Just 100 players in history have reached 350 home runs. Bryce Harper will join the club this year, as will Freddie Freeman, Manny Machado and Nolan Arenado.

CLIFF WELCH/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

#9 RANGERS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 55

Corey Seager excelled when healthy, **Marcus Semien** showed up to play every day and **Wyatt Langford** had an encouraging rookie year. Nothing else seemed to go right for the 2024 Rangers as they defended their World Series title. Few teams are likely to improve as much just from natural regression than the Rangers. Players such as **Adolis Garcia**, **Josh Jung**, **Evan Carter** and **Jonah Heim** had down years, while **Jacob deGrom** seeks his first full, healthy season post-Tommy John surgery.

Next First-Time All-Star: Langford, if he picks up where he left off.
Key Rookies: A year after graduating Langford and Carter, the Rangers' next rookie wave will hit on the mound, in the form of power righthanders **Kumar Rocker**, **Jack Leiter** and possibly **Emiliano Teodo**.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
2B	Marcus Semien	60
SS	Corey Seager	70
LF	Wyatt Langford	60
DH	Joc Pederson	50
RF	Adolis Garcia	50
3B	Josh Jung	50
CF	Evan Carter	50
1B	Jake Burger	50
C	Jonah Heim	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Jacob deGrom	60
SP	Nathan Eovaldi	55
SP	Jon Gray	50
SP	Tyler Mahle	50
SP	Cody Bradford	45
SP	Kumar Rocker	45
CL	Chris Martin	45
RP	Robert Garcia	40
RP	Jacob Webb	40

Corey Seager

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #19

A year after graduating two premier prospects—Wyatt Langford and Evan Carter—the Rangers once again front their system with an enviable duo: **Kumar Rocker** and **Sebastian Walcott**. Texas also got breakout years from **Emiliano Teodo** and **Winston Santos**, both of whom could crack the big leagues in 2025.

Top Prospect: Kumar Rocker, RHP

#10 CUBS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 55

The Cubs pounced on the opportunity to acquire all-star **Kyle Tucker**—even if only for one season—and he anchors a lineup that lacked starpower. Now he helps enhance the impact of **Ian Happ**, **Seiya Suzuki**, **Michael Busch** and **Dansby Swanson**, while helping young center fielder **Pete Crow-Armstrong** ease into a full season. Chicago has done well to build pitching depth even if it lacks an ace.

Next First-Time All-Star: Second baseman **Nico Hoerner** or Suzuki.
Key Rookies: The Cubs intend to turn over third base to 2023 first-rounder **Matt Shaw**, who could provide average overall production. Outfielder **Kevin Alcantara** made his MLB debut last season, while righthander **Cade Horton** and outfielder **Owen Caissie** have Triple-A experience.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
LF	Ian Happ	55
RF	Kyle Tucker	70
DH	Seiya Suzuki	50
1B	Michael Busch	55
SS	Dansby Swanson	60
2B	Nico Hoerner	55
CF	Pete Crow-Armstrong	50
3B	Matt Shaw	45
C	Miguel Amaya	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Shota Imanaga	55
SP	Justin Steele	55
SP	Jameson Taillon	45
SP	Matthew Boyd	45
SP	Colin Rea	40
SP	Jordan Wicks	45
CL	Ryan Pressly	45
RP	Porter Hodge	45
RP	Ryan Brasier	40

Kyle Tucker

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #15

The top of the Cubs' system is stocked with future big league pieces and potential trade chips. Chicago is thin on pitching, outside of top arm **Cade Horton**, but boasts a deep group of young middle infielders. The system lacks a truly transcendent talent, especially after trading away **Cam Smith** to the Astros to get Kyle Tucker.

Top Prospect: Matt Shaw, 3B

#11 ASTROS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 55

The Astros have won the AL West in each of the last seven 162-game seasons, so news of their demise has always been exaggerated. Alex Bregman and Kyle Tucker are gone from the 2024 team, but the frontline talent remains strong in Houston, led by **Jose Altuve**, **Yordan Alvarez** and **Yainer Diaz** in the lineup and **Framber Valdez** heading the rotation. Another step forward from starters **Hunter Brown**, **Ronel Blanco** and **Spencer Arrighetti** would help cover for a shallower lineup.

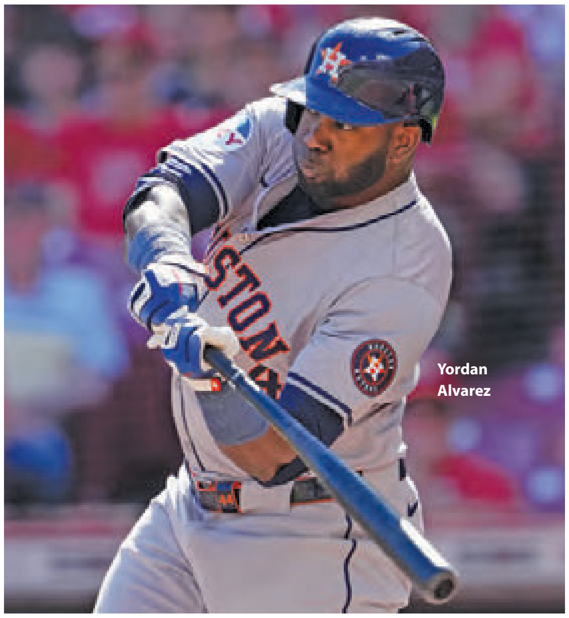
Next First-Time All-Star: Diaz or Brown.
Key Rookies: The Astros don't have an obvious Rookie of the Year vote-getter this season, such as Diaz in 2023, **Jeremy Peña** in 2022 or **Luis Garcia** in 2021, though outfielders **Jacob Melton** and **Zach Dezenzo** and third baseman **Shay Whitcomb** could see time.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
LF	Jose Altuve	55
3B	Isaac Paredes	55
DH	Yordan Alvarez	70
1B	Christian Walker	55
C	Yainer Diaz	55
SS	Jeremy Peña	55
RF	Chas McCormick	40
2B	Brendan Rodgers	40
CF	Jake Meyers	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Framber Valdez	60
SP	Hunter Brown	55
SP	Ronel Blanco	50
SP	Spencer Arrighetti	50
SP	Hayden Wesneski	45
SP	Luis Garcia	50
CL	Josh Hader	50
RP	Bryan Abreu	45
RP	Tayler Scott	40



Yordan Alvarez

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #29

The cupboard has been bare in Houston for a few seasons, but **Cam Smith** provides a much-needed jolt. Despite a lack of talent, few organizations have done more to coax value out of players over the last five seasons. A strong group of MLB hopefuls in **Jacob Melton**, **Brice Matthews** and **Zach Dezenzo** could factor in 2025.

Top Prospect: Cam Smith, 3B

BRACE HEMMELGARN/MINNESOTA TWINS/GETTY IMAGES (BREGMAN), ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES (CARROLL), MADDIE MALHOTRA/BOSTON RED SOX/GETTY IMAGES (CROCHET), QUINN HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES (SEAGER), MATT DIRKSEN/CHICAGO CUBS/GETTY IMAGES (TUCKER), DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES (ALVAREZ)

#12 MARINERS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

The song remains the same in Seattle. The Mariners' all-world rotation combines with an offense they hope is *just* good enough to reach October. **Julio Rodriguez**, **Cal Raleigh** and **Randy Arozarena** will perform the heavy lifting, but they will need help. **Logan Gilbert** is the staff ace with Cy Young aspirations. He has more than enough help in the form of **Luis Castillo**, **George Kirby**, **Bryce Miller** and **Bryan Woo**. Mariners starters led MLB last year with a 3.38 ERA and 18.7 K-BB%.

Next First-Time All-Star: Raleigh or Miller.

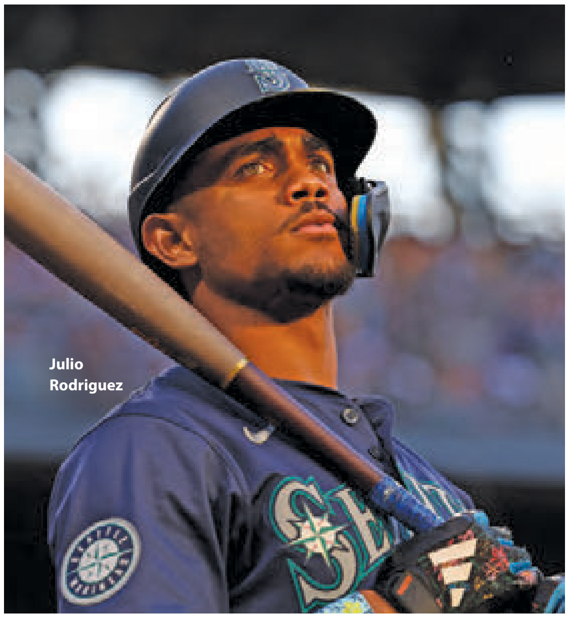
Key Rookies: Most of Seattle's excellent hitting prospects are at least a year away. **Cole Young** could be an exception if he hits his way into the second base picture. **Tyler Locklear** will also be on hand to help at first base as needed.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Victor Robles	45
CF	Julio Rodriguez	70
C	Cal Raleigh	65
LF	Randy Arozarena	55
1B	Luke Raley	40
DH	Mitch Haniger	45
SS	J.P. Crawford	45
3B	Jorge Polanco	40
2B	Dylan Moore	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Logan Gilbert	65
SP	Luis Castillo	55
SP	George Kirby	60
SP	Bryce Miller	55
SP	Bryan Woo	50
SP	Emerson Hancock	40
CL	Andres Muñoz	45
RP	Collin Snider	40
RP	Gregory Santos	40


Julio Rodriguez

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #5

After years of matriculating elite starting pitchers, the Mariners have stocked up on promising young hitters, including first-rounders **Colt Emerson**, **Cole Young** and **Harry Ford**. International scouting has filled in gaps with **Michael Arroyo**, **Felnin Celesten** and **Lazaro Montes**.

Top Prospect: Colt Emerson, SS

#13 PADRES

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

The Padres lost Tanner Scott and Jurickson Profar from their 2024 team and, most notably, brought in **Nick Pivetta** for the 2025 rotation. If they keep the team intact, San Diego has the type of top-heavy roster that could compete for the postseason. **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, **Manny Machado** and **Jackson Merrill** can be elite, while top-of-the-rotation arms **Dylan Cease**, **Michael King** and **Yu Darvish** miss a ton of bats. The Padres' bullpen also is deep with power options.

Next First-Time All-Star: Neither Cease nor King has made an all-star team, which seems like an oversight.

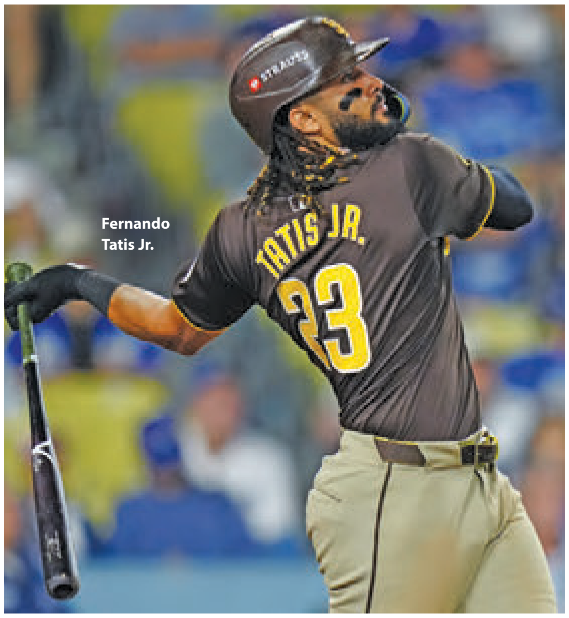
Key Rookies: Tirso Ornelas had a nice winter in the Mexican Pacific League and has performed in the upper minors. He could get playing time on the outfield corners.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
DH	Luis Arraez	50
RF	Fernando Tatis Jr.	70
CF	Jackson Merrill	65
3B	Manny Machado	65
1B	Jake Cronenworth	50
SS	Xander Bogaerts	55
2B	Jose Iglesias	40
LF	Jason Heyward	40
C	Elias Diaz	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Dylan Cease	60
SP	Michael King	60
SP	Yu Darvish	55
SP	Nick Pivetta	55
SP	Kyle Hart	45
SP	Matt Waldron	40
CL	Robert Suarez	45
RP	Jason Adam	45
RP	Jeremiah Estrada	45


Fernando Tatis Jr.

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #26

The Padres' system is headlined by two potential high-impact big leaguers in **Leodalis De Vries** and **Ethan Salas**, though there is a sizable gap between that duo and the rest of the system. A quartet of 2024 draft picks have assumed positions inside the top 10, headlined by southpaw **Kash Mayfield**.

Top Prospect: Leodalis De Vries, SS

#14 BREWERS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

The Brewers always seem to outpace their projections. Now, after losing free agent **Willy Adames** and trading **Devin Williams**, they face their latest challenge. **William Contreras** is arguably the best catcher in baseball, **Freddy Peralta** is a strong No. 1 starter and **Jackson Chourio** is poised for stardom. The rest of the roster lacks marquee names but is well-rounded, with strong defenders at skill positions, such as **Garrett Mitchell**, **Brice Turang**, **Joey Ortiz** and **Sal Frelick**.

Next First-Time All-Star: Chourio is the inevitable choice.

Key Rookies: From the organization that unleashed **Josh Hader** and **Devin Williams**, **Jacob Misiorowski** could be the Brewers' next elite closer. Reliever **Craig Yoho** and position players **Tyler Black** and **Caleb Durbin** could contribute.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Jackson Chourio	60
DH	Christian Yelich	50
C	William Contreras	65
CF	Garrett Mitchell	45
1B	Rhys Hoskins	40
2B	Brice Turang	50
SS	Joey Ortiz	45
LF	Sal Frelick	45
3B	Oliver Dunn	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Freddy Peralta	55
SP	Tobias Myers	50
SP	Nestor Cortes	50
SP	Aaron Civale	45
SP	Jose Quintana	45
SP	Aaron Ashby	40
CL	Trevor Megill	45
RP	Jared Koenig	40
RP	Joel Payamps	40

Jackson Chourio

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #9

Even after a series of prospect graduations, led by future star Jackson Chourio, the Brewers are still in a strong position on the farm. One of the game's best international programs continues to pump talent into the system, with Dominican shortstop **Jesus Made** their latest potential star signing atop their list.

Top Prospect: Jesus Made, SS

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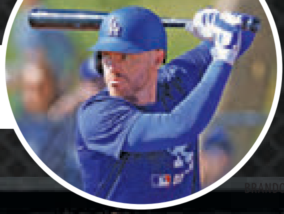
MILESTONEWATCH



FREDDIE FREEMAN
7 HR FROM 350

Freddie Freeman is barreling toward 350 home runs. The future Hall of Famer is already one of just 90 players ever with 1,000 each of runs, RBIs and walks.

Riley Greene

#15 TIGERS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

The Tigers sold off **Jack Flaherty** at the 2024 trade deadline but then went on a hot streak that resulted in one of the most unlikely wild card teams ever. Now, Flaherty is back in the rotation supporting Cy Young Award winner **Tarik Skubal** and younger pitchers **Reese Olson**, **Casey Mize** and **Jackson Jobe**. Free agent second baseman **Gleyber Torres** helps deepen a lineup full of talented but fairly inexperienced hitters, including **Riley Greene**, **Kerry Carpenter**, **Parker Meadows** and **Colt Keith**.

Next First-Time All-Star: Will Flaherty finally get his due?

Key Rookies: Jobe is positioned to be the top non-Roki Sasaki rookie pitcher with his deep repertoire. Shortstop **Trey Sweeney** and third baseman **Jace Jung** were called up together and accrued exactly 45 service days, keeping them rookie eligible on the nose.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
CF	Parker Meadows	45
2B	Gleyber Torres	50
LF	Riley Greene	65
DH	Kerry Carpenter	50
1B	Colt Keith	45
3B	Jace Jung	45
C	Jake Rogers	45
RF	Wenceel Perez	40
SS	Trey Sweeney	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Tarik Skubal	75
SP	Jack Flaherty	55
SP	Reese Olson	50
SP	Casey Mize	45
SP	Jackson Jobe	50
SP	Alex Cobb	50
CL	Beau Brieske	45
RP	Jason Foley	40
RP	Tyler Holton	45

Tarik Skubal

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #2

The cohesiveness in the Tigers' scouting and player development departments is paying off in a steady stream of MLB contributors. Tarik Skubal's Cy Young Award is a notable PD win. **Jackson Jobe**, **Max Clark** and **Kevin McGonigle** have high ceilings and aren't all that far away. They could provide a big boost in 2025 and 2026.

Top Prospect: Jackson Jobe, RHP

#16 TWINS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

The Twins' dismal finish to 2024—they fell out of a wild card with a 12-27 finish—obscures the high talent level in the Twin Cities. Also: the bar is set lower in the AL Central than any division. **Carlos Correa**, **Byron Buxton** and **Royce Lewis** form a strong core, when healthy, while **Pablo Lopez**, **Joe Ryan** and **Bailey Ober** might be the most unsung front three of a rotation. If some young MLB vets step forward—**Matt Wallner**, **Trevor Larnach**, **David Festa**, **Brooks Lee**, **Zebby Matthews**—then the Twins will be in business.

Next First-Time All-Star: Ryan, Ober or closer **Jhoan Duran** have the type of upside, as does 2017 No. 1 overall pick Lewis.

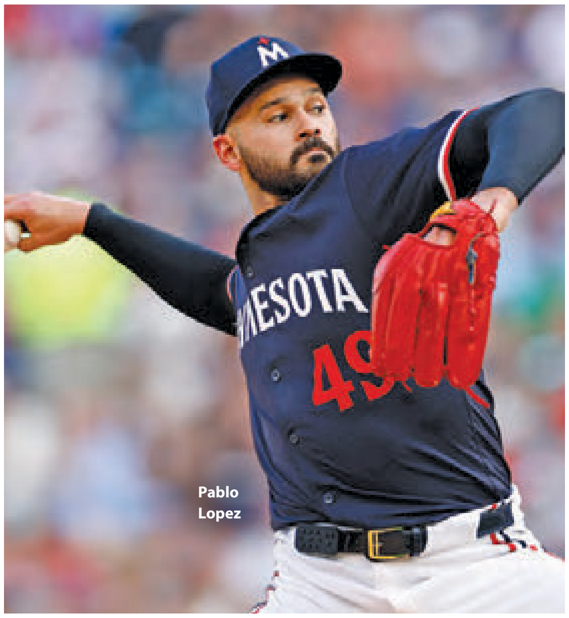
Key Rookies: Two of the Twins' top prospects are upper-level hitters **Emmanuel Rodriguez** and **Luke Keaschall**, who could muscle their way into the picture.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Matt Wallner	45
SS	Carlos Correa	55
CF	Byron Buxton	50
LF	Trevor Larnach	45
3B	Royce Lewis	50
C	Ryan Jeffers	45
DH	Willi Castro	45
1B	Ty France	40
2B	Brooks Lee	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Pablo Lopez	60
SP	Joe Ryan	55
SP	Bailey Ober	55
SP	Simeon Woods Richardson	45
SP	Chris Paddack	40
SP	David Festa	50
CL	Jhoan Duran	50
RP	Griffin Jax	45
RP	Cole Sands	40


Pablo Lopez

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #8

Winning a draft lottery pick that turned into **Walker Jenkins** gave the Twins their highest-ceiling prospect in years, and **Emmanuel Rodriguez** looks like another potential cornerstone if he can overcome injury issues. But Minnesota's most impressive feat has been its ability to steadily draft and develop later-round college pitchers.

Top Prospect: Walker Jenkins, OF

#17 GUARDIANS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

The plucky Guardians advanced to the AL Championship Series last season, then spent the offseason shedding salary and diversifying the pitching staff. Gone are Josh Naylor and Andres Gimenez. Coming aboard are young starters **Luis Ortiz** and **Slade Cecconi** as well as reclamations **John Means** and **Paul Sewald**. **Tanner Bibee** leads the rotation and **Emmanuel Clase** is the all-star closer. Superstar **Jose Ramirez** anchors a lineup with support from **Steven Kwan**, **Kyle Manzardo** and import **Carlos Santana**.

Next First-Time All-Star: Bibee

Key Rookies: Second baseman **Juan Brito**, lefthander **Joey Cantillo** and reliever **Andrew Walters** are among the young players who should surface in Cleveland this year. First-rounders **Chase DeLauter** and **Travis Bazzana** could also be in play.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
LF	Steven Kwan	60
3B	Jose Ramirez	70
DH	Kyle Manzardo	45
1B	Carlos Santana	40
CF	Lane Thomas	45
RF	Will Brennan	40
C	Bo Naylor	45
2B	Gabriel Arias	40
SS	Brayan Rocchio	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Tanner Bibee	55
SP	Ben Lively	40
SP	Gavin Williams	50
SP	Luis L. Ortiz	45
SP	Triston McKenzie	45
SP	Shane Bieber	50
CL	Emmanuel Clase	50
RP	Cade Smith	45
RP	Hunter Gaddis	45

Jose Ramirez

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #7

Cleveland's system is one of the deepest in the game. The organization remains a pitching development factory and continues to add impact talent in the draft and international market. Its top 10 is stuffed with high-confidence hitters and led by No. 1 overall pick **Travis Bazzana** and Venezuelan center fielder **Jaison Chourio**.

Top Prospect: Travis Bazzana, 2B

#18 RAYS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

The Rays lost access to Tropicana Field after Hurricane Milton blew the roof off, but they didn't suffer many personnel losses. **Yandy Diaz**, **Brandon Lowe** and **Josh Lowe** lead an offense that welcomes **Junior Caminero**—as well as free agent catcher **Danny Jansen**—for a full season. No. 1 starter **Shane McClanahan** is back from Tommy John surgery, supported by textbook breakout candidates **Taj Bradley**, **Ryan Pepiot** and **Shane Baz**.

Next First-Time All-Star: Josh Lowe or possibly Caminero—or one of the pitchers if a breakout materializes.

Key Rookies: Double-A Montgomery finished last season with shortstop **Carson Williams**, outfielder **Chandler Simpson** and first baseman **Tre' Morgan**, and while they aren't great bets to hold MLB jobs this season, they aren't that far off either.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
1B	Yandy Diaz	55
2B	Brandon Lowe	55
3B	Junior Caminero	55
RF	Josh Lowe	50
C	Danny Jansen	50
LF	Christopher Morel	40
DH	Jonathan Aranda	45
SS	Ha-Seong Kim	45
CF	Jonny DeLuca	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Shane McClanahan	55
SP	Taj Bradley	50
SP	Ryan Pepiot	50
SP	Zack Littell	45
SP	Shane Baz	50
SP	Drew Rasmussen	50
CL	Pete Fairbanks	45
RP	Edwin Uceta	45
RP	Garrett Cleavinger	40

Junior Caminero

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #6

The Rays' dip in farm system talent was brief. The decision to trade Randy Arozarena, Zach Eflin, Jason Adam and others at the 2024 deadline brought in a wide array of high-ceiling prospects. But the development of young homegrown arms such as **Trevor Harrison** and **Gary Gill Hill** has also provided a needed boost.

Top Prospect: Carson Williams, SS

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MILESTONE WATCH

TIM NWACHUKWU/GETTY IMAGES

TREA TURNER
21 SB FROM 300

Trea Turner swiped 19 bases last season, but if he has 21 in him this year, he will top 300, a threshold reached by only Starling Marte and Jose Altuve among active players.

#19 BLUE JAYS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

Pending free agents **Vladimir Guerrero Jr.** and **Bo Bichette** team up for potentially the final time to try to return Toronto to the postseason. Signing **Anthony Santander** and trading for **Andres Gimenez** helps lighten the load on Vlad and Bo. A veteran pitching staff adds starter **Max Scherzer** and closer **Jeff Hoffman**. The Blue Jays appear to be fairly average overall, meaning things could break very right—or very wrong—for them.

Next First-Time All-Star: If he continues at his second-half pace—1.80 ERA, .194 opponent average—then righthander **Bowden Francis** will receive attention.

Key Rookies: The Blue Jays will incorporate young blood in the form of power-hitting second baseman **Orelvis Martinez** and OBP-oriented outfielder **Alan Roden**.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SS	Bo Bichette	55
1B	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	65
LF	Anthony Santander	55
RF	George Springer	50
CF	Daulton Varsho	50
C	Alejandro Kirk	45
2B	Andres Gimenez	60
3B	Ernie Clement	40
DH	Joey Loperfido	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Kevin Gausman	55
SP	Jose Berrios	50
SP	Chris Bassitt	50
SP	Max Scherzer	50
SP	Bowden Francis	50
SP	Yariel Rodriguez	45
CL	Jeff Hoffman	45
RP	Chad Green	40
RP	Yimi Garcia	40

Vladimir Guerrero Jr.

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #23

The Blue Jays had a rough 2024 from an injury perspective. **Ricky Tiedemann**, **Landen Maroudis** and **Brandon Barriera** all had elbow surgery, and **Orelvis Martinez** was suspended for PEDs. Toronto has a group of talented but unheralded players in its Top 10 in **Arjun Nimmala**, **Josh Kasevich** and **Alan Roden**.

Top Prospect: Ricky Tiedemann, LHP

#20 REDS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 50

Things are looking up in Cincinnati, where new manager **Terry Francona** looks to lead a talented, young Reds team to the postseason. **Elly De La Cruz** has MVP upside and heads a lineup also featuring **Matt McLain**, **Tyler Stephenson** and **Spencer Steer**. Homegrown No. 1 starter **Hunter Greene** leads an enviable collection of young arms that also includes **Nick Lodolo** and, down the line, **Rhett Lowder** and possibly **Chase Burns**.

Next First-Time All-Star: Stephenson, McLain or Lodolo are all possibilities.

Key Rookies: Lowder debuted last August with a strong six-start run. His command helps him hang against MLB hitters. Righthander **Chase Petty** could pitch his way into a role if he retains the efficiency he showed last season.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
CF	TJ Friedl	45
2B	Matt McLain	50
SS	Elly De La Cruz	70
RF	Spencer Steer	45
C	Tyler Stephenson	50
DH	Christian Encarnacion-Strand	45
3B	Gavin Lux	45
LF	Austin Hays	45
1B	Jeimer Candelario	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Hunter Greene	55
SP	Brady Singer	50
SP	Nick Lodolo	50
SP	Nick Martinez	50
SP	Andrew Abbott	45
SP	Rhett Lowder	50
CL	Alexis Diaz	45
RP	Emilio Pagan	40
RP	Taylor Rogers	40

Hunter Greene

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #10

The Reds have built a pitching pipeline thanks to investing draft and trade capital. By the end of 2025, the Reds could have a rotation filled with homegrown arms, led by first-rounders **Hunter Greene**, **Rhett Lowder**, **Chase Burns** and **Nick Lodolo**. Now, the system needs to churn out a few big league-ready bats.

Top Prospect: Rhett Lowder, RHP

Elly De La Cruz

Bobby Witt Jr.

#21 ROYALS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 45

Led by all-world shortstop **Bobby Witt Jr.** and 2024 Cy Young Award contenders **Seth Lugo** and **Cole Ragans**, the Royals won 86 games and an AL wild card last season. It's going to be a tough act to follow in Kansas City, but the offseason acquisition of **Jonathan India** and the second-half power surge of **Vinnie Pasquantino** point to the potential for a more functional offense. The Royals have upgraded their bullpen by signing **Carlos Estevez** last offseason and trading for **Lucas Erceg** and **Hunter Harvey** last summer.

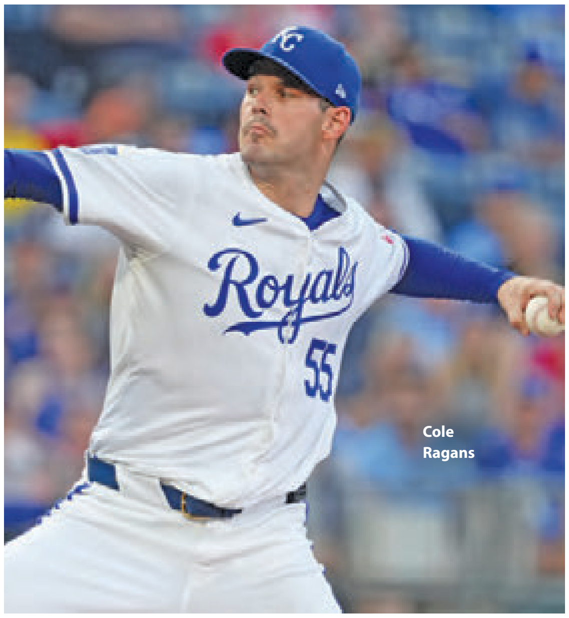
Next First-Time All-Star: Pasquantino could put things together.
Key Rookie: Lefthander **Noah Cameron** is on the short list for rotation reinforcement after reaching Triple-A for nine starts last season.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
DH	Jonathan India	50
SS	Bobby Witt Jr.	80
1B	Vinnie Pasquantino	55
C	Salvador Perez	50
2B	Michael Massey	45
RF	Hunter Renfroe	40
LF	MJ Melendez	45
3B	Maikel Garcia	40
CF	Kyle Isbel	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Cole Ragans	60
SP	Seth Lugo	55
SP	Michael Wacha	50
SP	Michael Lorenzen	45
SP	Kris Bubic	40
SP	Alec Marsh	40
CL	Carlos Estevez	45
RP	Lucas Erceg	45
RP	Hunter Harvey	45



Cole Ragans

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #27

The Royals are basking in the glow of an exceptional step forward in 2024. Bobby Witt Jr. is a young superstar to build around, but the Royals' farm system remains thin on potential regulars, especially when it comes to hitters. Much rests on first baseman **Jac Caglianone** and catcher **Blake Mitchell** meeting expectations.
Top Prospect: Jac Caglianone, 1B

LUKE HALES/GETTY IMAGES (WITT JR.), ED ZURGA/GETTY IMAGES (RAGANS), SUZANNA MITCHELL/SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS/GETTY IMAGES (ADAMES), JIM MCISAAC/GETTY IMAGES (SKENES), THEARON W. HENDERSON/GETTY IMAGES (ROOKER)

MILESTONE WATCH

MARK TAYLOR/GETTY IMAGES

NOLAN ARENADO

56 R FROM 1,000
9 HR FROM 350

With a typical season, Arenado will move into the top 10 all time for home runs by a player whose primary position was third base. He enters the year with 341.

#22 GIANTS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 45

The Giants lost Blake Snell and Michael Conforto to the rival Dodgers but plugged a major hole on the roster by signing shortstop **Willy Adames**. He and **Matt Chapman** lead an offense that will find out if **Jung-Hoo Lee**, **Heliot Ramos** and **Tyler Fitzgerald** are for real. New president of baseball operations **Buster Posey** also brought in **Justin Verlander** to deepen a rotation led by **Logan Webb** and power arms **Robbie Ray** and **Jordan Hicks**.

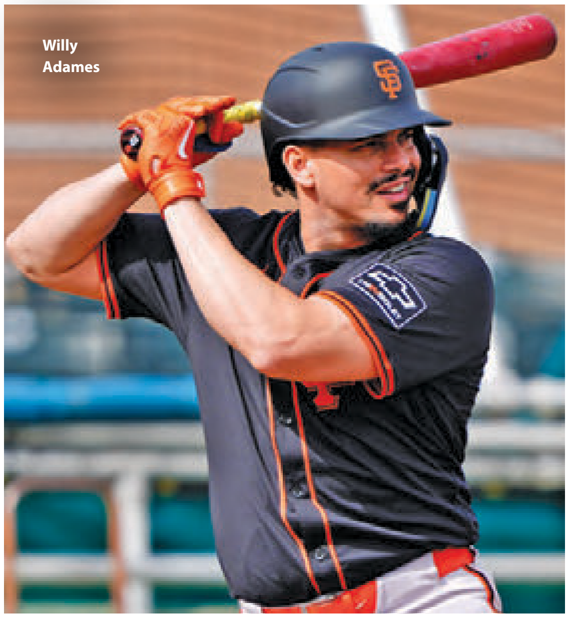
Next First-Time All-Star: Hicks or Lee might be the best bets of an unlikely pool.
Key Rookies: The Giants rushed 19-year-old first baseman **Bryce Eldridge** to Triple-A, and while a prominent role is unlikely for 2025, he is a tantalizing possibility. Changeup artist **Carson Whisenhunt** also is in play after a full year at Triple-A in 2024.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
1B	LaMonte Wade Jr.	45
SS	Willy Adames	60
CF	Jung Hoo Lee	45
3B	Matt Chapman	60
LF	Heliot Ramos	50
RF	Mike Yastrzemski	45
2B	Tyler Fitzgerald	50
DH	Jerar Encarnacion	40
C	Patrick Bailey	50

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Logan Webb	65
SP	Justin Verlander	50
SP	Robbie Ray	50
SP	Jordan Hicks	45
SP	Kyle Harrison	45
SP	Landen Roupp	45
CL	Ryan Walker	45
RP	Camilo Doval	45
RP	Tyler Rogers	40



Willy Adames

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #24

Bryce Eldridge is one of the best prospects going, but beyond him are questions. Righthander **Mason Black** and outfielder **Grant McCray** give San Francisco some MLB-ready options, and **Marco Luciano** remains a giant wild card. Lefthander **Carson Whisenhunt** should make his MLB debut this season.
Top Prospect: Bryce Eldridge, 1B

#23 ATHLETICS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 45

The Athletics quietly built an interesting young core in their final season in Oakland. The team that takes the field in West Sacramento is solid up the middle with power-hitting catcher **Shea Langeliers**, late-blooming center fielder **JJ Bleday**, second baseman **Zack Gelof** and rookie shortstop **Jacob Wilson**. Right fielder **Lawrence Butler** and DH **Brent Rooker** supply the fireworks. The 2024 team had zero rotation presence, which the A's addressed by signing **Luis Severino** and trading for **Jeffrey Springs**. A power bullpen led by **Mason Miller** is a team strength.

Next First-Time All-Star: Langeliers or Butler could fit.
Key Rookies: Wilson has special bat-to-ball skills and the ability to lock down shortstop defensively. First baseman **Nick Kurtz**, drafted fourth overall last year, could rise quickly to MLB if he hits.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Lawrence Butler	55
DH	Brent Rooker	55
CF	JJ Bleday	50
C	Shea Langeliers	55
1B	Tyler Soderstrom	45
2B	Zack Gelof	50
LF	Seth Brown	40
3B	Gio Urshela	40
SS	Jacob Wilson	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Luis Severino	50
SP	Jeffrey Springs	50
SP	JP Sears	45
SP	Osvaldo Bido	45
SP	Mitch Spence	40
SP	Joey Estes	40
CL	Mason Miller	55
RP	Jose Leclerc	45
RP	Tyler Ferguson	40

Brent Rooker

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #11

The Athletics' system is headlined by first-rounders **Nick Kurtz** and **Jacob Wilson**, and the organization's depth is stronger entering 2025. It's paramount that the A's hit on both Kurtz and Wilson, considering it remains an open question as to whether they've produced enough high-end talent to sustain a long-term winner.
Top Prospect: Nick Kurtz, 1B

#24 PIRATES

OVERALL BA GRADE: 45

Led by NL Rookie of the Year **Paul Skenes**, power pitching is the name of the game in Pittsburgh. **Jared Jones** and **Mitch Keller** offer rotation support, while **Bubba Chandler** is one of the brightest pitching prospects in the game. A late-season shift from shortstop to center field could keep **Oneil Cruz** focused on hitting. **Bryan Reynolds** is the Pirates' best all-around hitter in a lineup that could struggle to supply enough runs, even if the young pitchers come through.

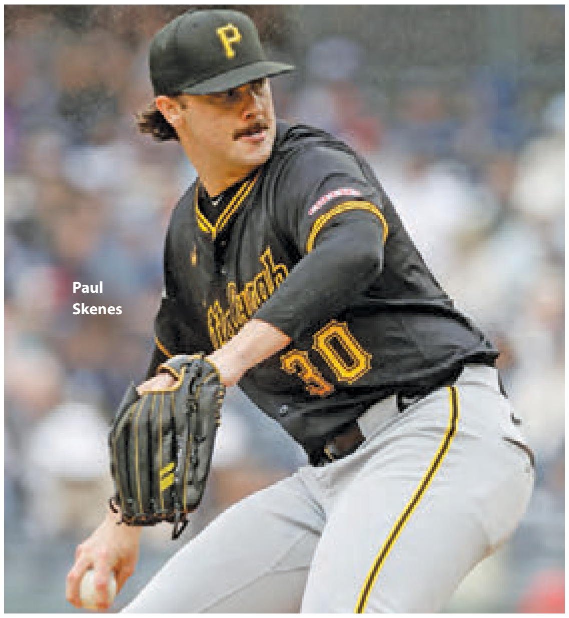
Next First-Time All-Star: Cruz or Jones could break through.
Key Rookies: Chandler has the kind of potential to make the Opening Day roster, as Jones did last year. Second baseman **Nick Yorke** and outfielder **Billy Cook** have experienced Triple-A success and could hit their way into expanded roles.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
LF	Tommy Pham	40
RF	Bryan Reynolds	50
CF	Oneil Cruz	55
1B	Spencer Horwitz	45
DH	Andrew McCutchen	45
C	Joey Bart	45
2B	Nick Gonzales	40
3B	Ke'Bryan Hayes	45
SS	Isiah Kiner-Falefa	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Paul Skenes	75
SP	Mitch Keller	55
SP	Jared Jones	55
SP	Andrew Heaney	45
SP	Bailey Falter	40
SP	Bubba Chandler	50
CL	David Bednar	45
RP	Dennis Santana	40
RP	Colin Holderman	40



Paul Skenes

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #16

Pittsburgh's pitching development machine rolls on. **Bubba Chandler** is the latest Pirates arm to rank among the game's top pitching prospects, and more upper-level pitching talent lines up behind him. Pittsburgh's hitting depth faces far more scrutiny, making 2024 first-rounder **Konnor Griffin** a key focal point.
Top Prospect: Bubba Chandler, RHP

#25 CARDINALS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 40

The Cardinals are committed to getting a long look at young players this season, including **Masyn Winn**, **Jordan Walker**, **Nolan Gorman**, **Ivan Herrera** and possibly **Victor Scott II** in the lineup and **Michael McGreevy** and likely **Quinn Mathews** on the mound. This will be a bridge season in St. Louis between the **John Mozeliak** era and the **Chaim Bloom** one that begins in 2026.

Next First-Time All-Star: Winn or possibly outfielder **Lars Nootbaar**.
Key Rookies: Mathews is the reigning Minor League Pitcher of the Year after he upped his velocity and reached Triple-A in his first pro season. Second baseman **Thomas Saggese** and righthander McGreevy were late callups in 2024 and could carve out larger roles this season.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SS	Masyn Winn	60
CF	Lars Nootbaar	45
1B	Willson Contreras	55
3B	Nolan Arenado	50
LF	Brendan Donovan	45
DH	Alec Burleson	45
RF	Jordan Walker	45
2B	Nolan Gorman	45
C	Ivan Herrera	45

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Sonny Gray	60
SP	Erick Fedde	50
SP	Miles Mikolas	45
SP	Andre Pallante	50
SP	Steven Matz	40
SP	Michael McGreevy	45
CL	Ryan Helsley	50
RP	Matthew Liberatore	40
RP	Ryan Fernandez	40

Masyn Winn

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #18

The Cardinals must have felt like they won the lottery when top college shortstop **JJ Wetherholt** dropped to them at No. 7 overall in the 2024 draft. He heads a system with a balance of proximity pitching and Rookie-level position standouts in shortstop **Yairo Padilla** and catcher **Rainiel Rodriguez**.
Top Prospect: JJ Wetherholt, SS

#26 NATIONALS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 40

Things are beginning to coalesce in Washington. Three products from the 2022 Juan Soto trade with the Padres are already key contributors: shortstop **CJ Abrams**, left fielder **James Wood** and No. 1 starter **MacKenzie Gore**. Top 2023 pick **Dylan Crews** takes over in right field, while offseason imports **Nathaniel Lowe** and **Josh Bell** fortify the middle of the lineup. If young Nationals pitchers, including **Jake Irvin**, **Mitchell Parker** and **DJ Herz**, can take another step forward, this team could hang in the wild card race.

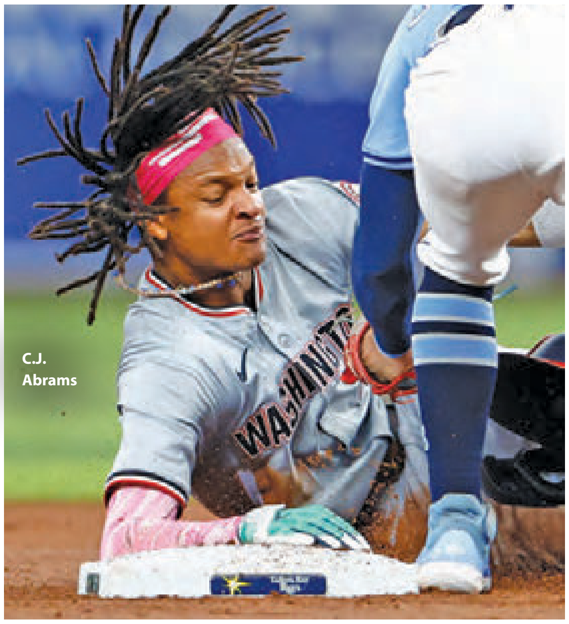
Next First-Time All-Star: Wood or Gore.
Key Rookie: Crews made his MLB debut late last season and contributes enough across the board to weather rough stretches at the plate. Reliever **Zach Brzykcy** could be ready to assume high-leverage work.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SS	CJ Abrams	50
RF	Dylan Crews	50
LF	James Wood	55
1B	Nathaniel Lowe	50
DH	Josh Bell	45
2B	Luis Garcia Jr.	50
C	Keibert Ruiz	45
3B	Paul DeJong	40
CF	Jacob Young	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	MacKenzie Gore	55
SP	Jake Irvin	45
SP	Mitchell Parker	45
SP	Trevor Williams	45
SP	Michael Soroka	45
SP	DJ Herz	45
CL	Kyle Finnegan	45
RP	Jorge Lopez	40
RP	Derek Law	40


C.J. Abrams

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #14

Outfielder **Dylan Crews** is one of the top prospects in the game and carries a lot of weight in a system that remains a bit top-heavy, though righthanders **Travis Sykora** and **Jarlin Susana** offer hope that the organization can add much-needed pitching depth in the near future.
Top Prospect: Dylan Crews, OF

#27 ANGELS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 40

The Angels set a franchise record with 99 losses last season when the team completely cratered in the final two months. Los Angeles made an effort to add value around the margins by trading for **Jorge Soler** and signing **Yusei Kikuchi** and **Travis d'Arnaud** as well as reclamation projects **Kyle Hendricks** and **Yoan Moncada**. Future Hall of Famer **Mike Trout** is back, while young players such as **Jose Soriano**, **Zach Neto**, **Logan O'Hoppe**, **Reid Detmers** and **Nolan Schanuel** could step forward.

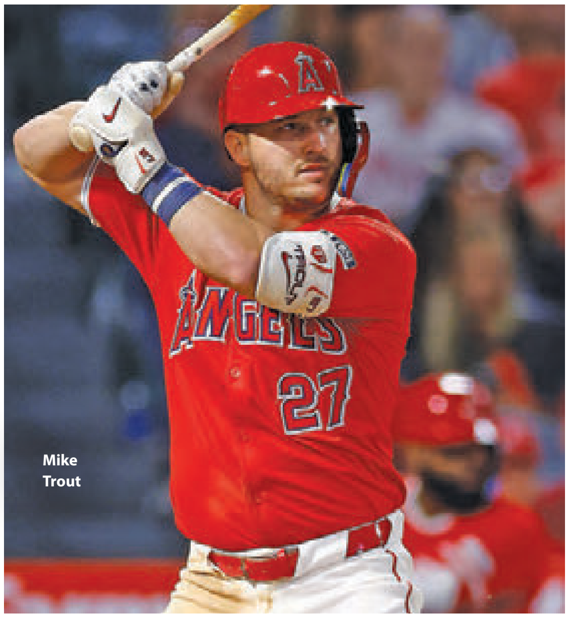
Next First-Time All-Star: Soriano, Neto or O'Hoppe.
Key Rookies: Young pitchers **Caden Dana** and **Sam Aldegheri** made their MLB debuts last season and could kick in even more innings this year. Second baseman **Christian Moore** should be yet another college hitter fast-tracked by the Angels to MLB.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Mike Trout	60
SS	Zach Neto	55
LF	Taylor Ward	50
DH	Jorge Soler	50
3B	Yoan Moncada	40
C	Logan O'Hoppe	50
1B	Nolan Schanuel	40
CF	Jo Adell	40
2B	Luis Rengifo	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Yusei Kikuchi	55
SP	Jose Soriano	50
SP	Tyler Anderson	40
SP	Kyle Hendricks	40
SP	Reid Detmers	45
SP	Jack Kochanowicz	40
CL	Kenley Jansen	45
RP	Ben Joyce	45
RP	Brock Burke	40

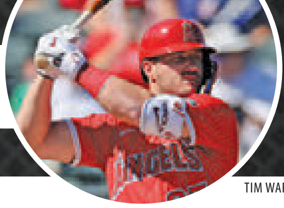

Mike Trout

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #30

The Angels regularly hover near the bottom of these rankings. Some of that is because the organization calls up players like **Zach Neto** and **Nolan Schanuel** much earlier than other organizations would. The decision to not trade **Shohei Ohtani** in 2023 to restock the system still stings.
Top Prospect: Caden Dana, RHP

MICHAEL REAVES/GETTY IMAGES (WINN), DOUGLAS P. DEFELICE/GETTY IMAGES (ABRAMS), RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES (TROUT), MEGAN BRIGGS/GETTY IMAGES (ALCANTARA), DUSTIN BRADFORD/GETTY IMAGES (DOYLE), MATT DIRKSEN/GETTY IMAGES (ROBERT JR.)

MILESTONEWATCH


TIM WARNER/GETTY IMAGES

MIKE TROUT
46 RBIs FROM 1,000
20 BB FROM 1,000

Just 90 players in history have totaled 1,000 runs, walks and RBIs. Trout enters the season with 1,123 runs scored, and he's zeroing in on clearing the other two hurdles.

#28 MARLINS

OVERALL BA GRADE: 30

The Marlins always seem to have more pitching than other last-place teams, and this year will be no exception. Ace **Sandy Alcantara** returns from Tommy John surgery, as does 2023 rookie phenom **Eury Perez** later in the year. Every team in baseball would love to get its hands on young starters **Ryan Weathers**, **Edward Cabrera** and **Max Meyer**. Every other aspect of the 2025 Marlins is unsettled, though **Xavier Edwards** and **Connor Norby** appear fairly settled on the left side of the infield.

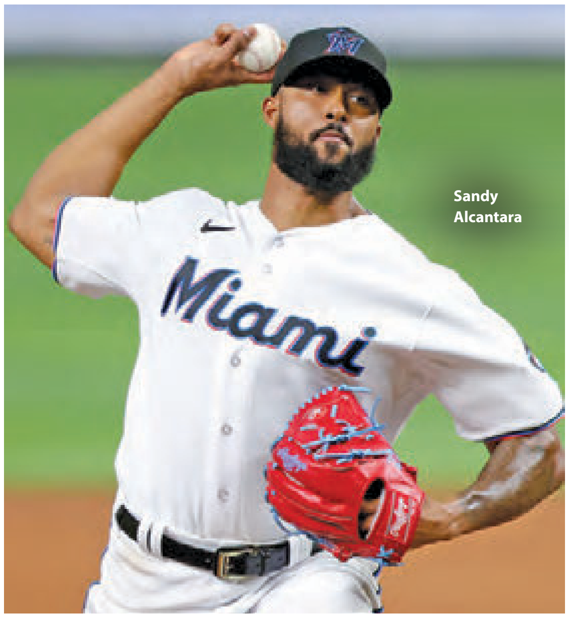
Next First-Time All-Star: Probably Perez, though not this season.
Key Rookies: Marlins catchers were a disaster last season. That creates a wide lane for **Agustin Ramirez**, the key prospect from the Jazz Chisholm Jr. trade with the Yankees, and homegrown product **Joe Mack**, a minor league Gold Glove winner last season.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SS	Xavier Edwards	45
3B	Connor Norby	45
RF	Jesus Sanchez	45
DH	Jonah Bride	40
1B	Matt Mervis	40
2B	Otto Lopez	45
LF	Kyle Stowers	40
CF	Dane Myers	40
C	Nick Fortes	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Sandy Alcantara	55
SP	Ryan Weathers	50
SP	Edward Cabrera	45
SP	Max Meyer	45
SP	Cal Quantrill	45
SP	Eury Perez	55
CL	Calvin Faucher	40
RP	Jesus Tinoco	40
RP	Anthony Bender	40


Sandy Alcantara

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #21

The turnover in the Marlins' front office in recent years has led to instability, but the organization's inability to draft, develop and hold on to its first-rounders, such as JJ Bleday and Josh Naylor, is not ideal. Adding **Starlyn Caba** helps, but Miami still has just two Top 100 Prospects coming off a 62-win season in 2024.
Top Prospect: Thomas White, LHP

#29 ROCKIES

OVERALL BA GRADE: 20

The Rockies have a fairly set lineup configuration, anchored by veterans **Ryan McMahon** and **Kris Bryant** but with some room for younger players to mature into prominent roles. That list includes **Brenton Doyle**, **Ezequiel Tovar**, **Michael Toglia**, **Nolan Jones** and **Jordan Beck**. Pitching is always going to be a problem at altitude, and Colorado is largely trading water in its rotation while it awaits younger pitchers to emerge.

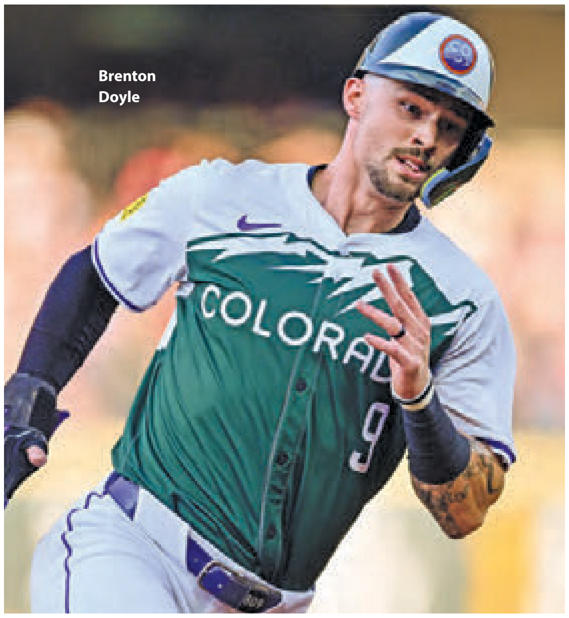
Next First-Time All-Star: Either Doyle or Tovar.
Key Rookies: The first wave of exciting young arms to reach Denver is scheduled to arrive this year. Righthander **Chase Dollander** is the best pitching prospect ever developed by the organization, while reliever **Seth Halvorsen** was fast-tracked from the 2023 draft to MLB last year.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
CF	Brenton Doyle	55
3B	Ryan McMahon	50
SS	Ezequiel Tovar	50
DH	Kris Bryant	45
2B	Thairo Estrada	40
1B	Michael Toglia	45
LF	Nolan Jones	45
RF	Jordan Beck	45
C	Jacob Stallings	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	German Marquez	50
SP	Ryan Feltner	40
SP	Kyle Freeland	45
SP	Antonio Senzatela	40
SP	Bradley Blalock	40
SP	Chase Dollander	50
CL	Tyler Kinley	40
RP	Seth Halvorsen	40
RP	Luis Peralta	40


Brenton Doyle

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #13

First-rounder **Chase Dollander** cemented himself as one of the most promising pitching prospects in the game, and Colorado landed College Player of the Year **Charlie Condon** in the draft. The Rockies continue to be a well-oiled machine on the international market and have a surprising amount of pitching depth overall.
Top Prospect: Chase Dollander, RHP

#30 WHITE SOX

OVERALL BA GRADE: 20

While good news is in short supply on the South Side, the fact is that there is nowhere to go but up for last year's 121-game losers. Big seasons from **Luis Robert Jr.** or **Andrew Vaughn** would make them trade chips. Otherwise, it's a season of evaluating young players, such as **Colson Montgomery** to **Miguel Vargas**. Young starters **Jonathan Cannon**, **Davis Martin** and rookie **Sean Burke** might never have a better opportunity to get a foot in the door.

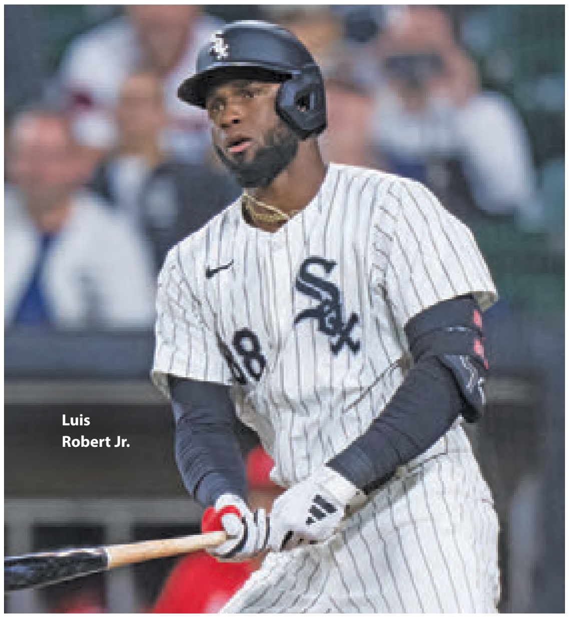
Next First-Time All-Star: Magic 8 Ball says: "Ask again later."
Key Rookies: Montgomery will get a long look at shortstop, as will Burke in the rotation. Only health can keep them off the field at this point. Middle infielder **Chase Meidroth** could be an OBP asset, while **Kyle Teel** is likely the catcher of the future. Both are products of the Garret Crochet trade with the Red Sox.

KEY HITTERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
RF	Mike Tauchman	40
CF	Luis Robert Jr.	50
LF	Andrew Benintendi	40
1B	Andrew Vaughn	40
DH	Joey Gallo	40
2B	Lenyn Sosa	40
3B	Miguel Vargas	40
SS	Colson Montgomery	40
C	Korey Lee	40

KEY PITCHERS

Pos	Player	BA Grade
SP	Martin Perez	40
SP	Jonathan Cannon	45
SP	Davis Martin	40
SP	Sean Burke	40
SP	Bryse Wilson	40
SP	Drew Thorpe	45
CL	Justin Anderson	40
RP	Fraser Ellard	40
RP	Gus Varland	40


Luis Robert Jr.

FARM SYSTEM RANKING #4

This farm system is steadily trending up, which has to be the expectation following a 121-loss season. A bounceback season from **Colson Montgomery** and productive ones from new acquisitions **Kyle Teel** and **Braden Montgomery** could kick-start the long climb to respectability.
Top Prospect: Noah Schultz, LHP

TOP 20 ROOKIES

The top first-year talent for 2025, taking both talent and opportunity into account

by MATT EDDY

Paul Skenes, 2024 National League Rookie of the Year

Luis Gil, 2024 American League Rookie of the Year.

MARY DECICCO/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Rookies and other young players are the lifeblood of an MLB organization.

It's just hard to know which ones will click right away—and which ones will require additional lessons while learning on the job against MLB competition.

But that doesn't stop us from trying to forecast this year's top rookies. Here, we rank our top 20 based on how we think they'll perform in the 2025 season.

Last year, we led off our rookie ranking with Yoshinobu Yamamoto, Evan Carter and Jackson Chourio. The Dodgers' Yamamoto pitched effectively for 90 innings but missed time to injury, while the Rangers' Carter missed most of the season with a back strain.

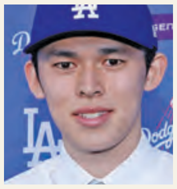
The Brewers' Chourio was an unqualified success who went 20-20 as a 20-year-old and finished third in National League Rookie of the Year voting.

Pirates righthander Paul Skenes won the ROY award, while Padres outfielder Jackson Merrill finished runner-up. They both made the preseason ranking, albeit by placing at 20 and 17, respectively.

Wyatt Langford (No. 5), Colt Keith (8), Shota Imanaga (9) and Masyn Winn (10) all made Opening Day rosters and produced.

1 ROKI SASAKI

TEAM: DODGERS **AGE:** 23 **POS:** RHP



Led by Shohei Ohtani, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and now Sasaki, the Dodgers have more Japanese starpower than any team outside the NPB. Sasaki sits 96-100 mph and backs his heater with a plus slider and elite splitter. He throws a ton of strikes and should instantly be an effective MLB starter—possibly at the top of a rotation.

BRANDON SLOTER/GETTY IMAGES

102 *The peak velocity in miles per hour that Sasaki recorded—with remarkably little effort—while pitching in Japan.*

5 MATT SHAW

TEAM: CUBS **AGE:** 23 **POS:** 3B

Following a 21-homer, 31-steal season in the upper minors last year, Shaw is ready for his rollout as Cubs third baseman this season. If the natural shortstop can stick at the hot corner, he will help solidify a deep, balanced Chicago lineup that has been infused with former Astros star Kyle Tucker for at least this season.

MATT DIRKSEN/CHICAGO CUBS/GETTY IMAGES

13 *The overall pick number the Cubs used to draft Shaw in 2023, making him the highest-drafted player in Maryland history.*

MILESTONEWATCH

RICH STORRY/GETTY IMAGES

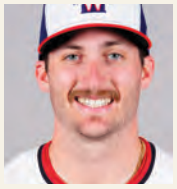
JOSH HADER
1 SAVE FROM 200

Josh Hader has reached 30 saves in each 162-game season since 2019. His 187 saves in that time leads all MLB closers. This year, Hader will reach 200 for his career.

2

DYLAN CREWS

TEAM: NATIONALS **AGE:** 23 **POS:** OF



Crews zoomed from No. 2 pick in the 2023 draft to his MLB debut in August 2024. Now, he has a clear path to the right field job in Washington for the next six seasons, and maybe more. Crews does a little bit of everything well and is a big part of the Nationals' future core, along with James Wood, CJ Abrams and MacKenzie Gore.

JOE ROBBINS/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

5 *The number of above-average or better credited to Crews. The only prospect who can say the same is the Tigers' Max Clark.*

3

JACKSON JOBE

TEAM: TIGERS **AGE:** 22 **POS:** RHP

Drafted third overall in 2021, Jobe turned in his first mostly healthy season on the farm in 2024 and made his MLB debut in September. He added a curveball this season to go with his sweeper, cutter and changeup, and his wide arsenal of swing-and-miss pitches gives him a good chance to adapt quickly.

ALEX BIERENS DE HAAN/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES

3 *The number of above-average secondary pitches, per the at FanGraphs.com Stuff+ model, thrown by Jobe in his MLB debut.*

4

KRISTIAN CAMPBELL

TEAM: RED SOX **AGE:** 23 **POS:** 2B

Red Sox hitting development helped turn Campbell from a non-descript 2023 fourth-rounder out of Georgia Tech into one of the top prospects in the game just a year later. Now, he has a good chance to play a part for a Boston lineup that could use a righthanded bat and a long-term second baseman.

DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES

.997 *The OPS compiled by Campbell at three levels in his Minor League Player of the Year season in 2024.*

6

JASSON DOMINGUEZ

TEAM: YANKEES **AGE:** 22 **POS:** OF

Dominguez burst on the MLB season late in 2023 when he homered off Justin Verlander in his first at-bat. He then spent most of 2024 working his way back to the Bronx as he recovered from Tommy John surgery. Now, the switch-hitter and four-time No. 1 Yankees prospect has a clear path to everyday reps in left field.

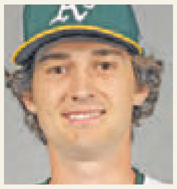
MARK TAYLOR/GETTY IMAGES

6 *The number of times Dominguez has ranked as a top prospect for the Yankees. He lost 2020 to the pandemic and half of 2024 to injury.*

7

JACOB WILSON

TEAM: ATHLETICS **AGE:** 23 **POS:** SS



About a year after being drafted sixth overall in 2023, Wilson made his MLB debut for the A's. On his way to Oakland, he hit .433 with a 6.6% strikeout rate in the upper minors. A hamstring injury sidelined him in MLB and keeps him rookie-eligible for 2025, when he will make plenty of contact and play shortstop every day.

CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

9.7% *The strikeout rate Wilson recorded in his 2024 MLB debut, the fifth-lowest by any batter with at least 100 plate appearances.*

8

ROMAN ANTHONY

TEAM: RED SOX **AGE:** 21 **POS:** OF

Anthony ascended to No. 1 overall prospect status last summer and fell out of the top spot only when Roki Sasaki signed with an MLB club. Anthony is the youngest player to rank in the top 20, so he faces the steepest learning curve—but his power-and-patience approach and lefthanded bat seem tailor-made for a big league outfield.

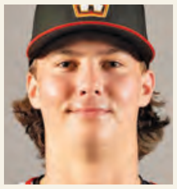
DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES

116 *The max exit velocity recorded on a batted ball by Anthony in the minor leagues in 2024. No Top 100 Prospect hitter struck one harder.*

9

BUBBA CHANDLER

TEAM: PIRATES **AGE:** 22 **POS:** RHP



A two-way star in high school who initially tried to play both ways as a pro, Chandler has steadily risen in stature as a pitching prospect since focusing his time on the mound. Now, he's ready to bring his elite fastball and strong secondary stuff to a Pirates rotation that saw Paul Skenes and Jared Jones debut last year.

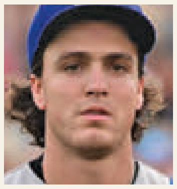
JULIO AGUILAR/GETTY IMAGES

96.8 *The average four-seam fastball velocity for Chandler last season in the minor leagues, making him one of hardest-throwing starters.*

10

CHASE DOLLANDER

TEAM: ROCKIES **AGE:** 23 **POS:** RHP



Let's get the bad news out of the way first: Dollander will make half his starts in Coors Field. Now, for the good news: Dollander is the best pitching prospect the Rockies have ever developed. He has the type of power stuff and wide arsenal that portends success at sea level—and hopefully far above.

BILL MITCHELL

8 *Dollander's rank on the Top 100 Prospects, which ties Franklin Morales in 2008 for the highest ever for a Rockies pitching prospect.*

11

KUMAR ROCKER

TEAM: RANGERS **AGE:** 25 **POS:** RHP

Rocker had Tommy John surgery in 2023, but he didn't let that slow his ascent. The third overall pick in 2022 required just 65 total minor league innings before making his MLB debut last September. Rocker throws hard, throws strikes and owns one of the best sliders in the business. He has the goods to be a No. 4 starter or better.

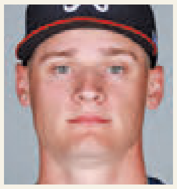
MICHAEL ZAGARIS/OAKLAND ATHLETICS/GETTY IMAGES

40.6% *The swinging-strike rate against Rocker's slider by minor leaguers in 2024, the highest for any pitcher to throw at least 100 sliders.*

15

AJ SMITH-SHAWVER

TEAM: BRAVES **AGE:** 22 **POS:** RHP



A one-time high school teammate of Bobby Witt Jr., Smith-Shawver made his MLB debut as a 20-year-old in 2023. He spent most of 2024 at Triple-A, but it was not time wasted. Smith-Shawver truly refined a changeup to go with his fastball, slider and cutter. Now, he is vying for rotation innings in Atlanta.

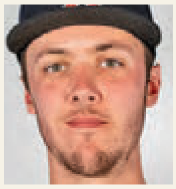
MATTHEW GRIMES JR./ATLANTA BRAVES/GETTY IMAGES

1,127 *The low spin rate, in revolutions per minute, on Smith-Shawver's changeup last year, one of the best readings among minor leaguers.*

16

JACOB MISIOROWSKI

TEAM: BREWERS **AGE:** 23 **POS:** RHP



The Brewers developed Misiorowski as a starter through Double-A before setting him loose as a reliever at Triple-A late in 2024. He allowed just five hits in 14 appearances for Nashville while unleashing a fastball up to 100 mph and wicked breaking stuff. Misiorowski should be a big factor in Milwaukee's bullpen.

MIKE JANES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES

7.4 *The elite extension, measured in feet, that Misiorowski gets off the rubber, positioning him that much closer to the hitter.*

17

QUINN MATHEWS

TEAM: CARDINALS **AGE:** 24 **POS:** LHP

Drafted in the fourth round out of Stanford in 2023, Mathews defied all expectations in 2024 by climbing from Low-A to Triple-A and winning Minor League Pitcher of the Year honors. Adding power to his fastball keyed Mathews' rise, but his secondary pitches and plus control give him a chance to succeed as a rookie starter.

CLIFF WELCH/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

202 *Number of minor league-leading strikeouts by Mathews in 2024, one of just 13 minor league seasons with at least 200 since 2000.*

OTHERS TO WATCH **Sean Burke** RHP, White Sox | **Chase DeLauter** OF, Guardians | **Jace Jung** 3B, Tigers | **Jordan Lawlar** SS, D-backs | **Coby Mayo** 3B, Orioles

MILESTONEWATCH

MIKE CHRISTY/GETTY IMAGES

KENLEY JANSEN

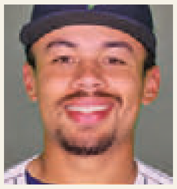
32 SAVES FROM THIRD ALL-TIME

With a typical Kenley Jansen season, the veteran closer will assume third place on the all-time saves list. Thirty-two of them will move him to 479 and past Lee Smith.

12

DRAKE BALDWIN

TEAM: BRAVES **AGE:** 24 **POS:** C



The Braves bid adieu to backup Travis d'Arnaud in the offseason, clearing the way for Baldwin to win a share of Atlanta's catching job with Sean Murphy. The lefthanded-hitting Baldwin did his best to prove he was ready in the upper minors last year by getting on base, hitting for power and improving his work behind the plate.

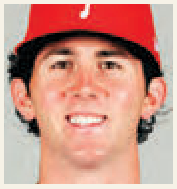
BRIAN WESTERHOLT/FOUR SEAM IMAGES

.407 *Baldwin's OBP at Gwinnett last season. Only one Triple-A catcher had a higher mark at the 300-plate appearance threshold.*

13

ANDREW PAINTER

TEAM: PHILLIES **AGE:** 22 **POS:** RHP



Painter reached Double-A as a 19-year-old in 2022 and recorded a 1.56 ERA at three stops. Elbow trouble and eventual Tommy John surgery wiped out his 2023 and 2024 seasons, but he made a triumphant return in the Arizona Fall League. Now, the Phillies are targeting July to unleash Painter's deadly pitch mix on MLB hitters.

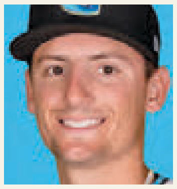
MIKE CARLSON/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES

15.2 *The number of innings Painter threw in the 2024 Arizona Fall League, his first official game action since Sept. 16, 2022.*

14

COLSON MONTGOMERY

TEAM: WHITE SOX **AGE:** 23 **POS:** SS



Montgomery looked out of sync at the plate for much of 2024 at Triple-A, but he appeared to right the ship in September and in the Arizona Fall League. If those gains hold, he has the inside track to most of the shortstop reps in Chicago for the rebuilding White Sox. Power is his calling card, but he's a sturdy shortstop defender as well.

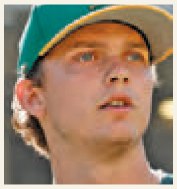
DAVID DUROCHIK/DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

130 *The number of games played by Montgomery last season at Triple-A to pave the way for his 2025 rookie year.*

18

NICK KURTZ

TEAM: ATHLETICS **AGE:** 22 **POS:** 1B



The Athletics drafted Kurtz fourth overall out of Wake Forest in July, pushed him to Double-A by the end of August and then had him raking in the Arizona Fall League by November. If he hits in the minor leagues at the outset of 2025, Kurtz will get a big league look for the upstart A's in relatively short order.

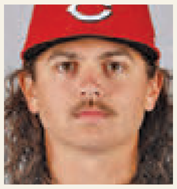
NORM HALL/GETTY IMAGES

1.283 *Kurtz's OPS in pro ball last summer in a 12-game sample up to Double-A. He also put up a 1.058 OPS in 13 AFL games.*

19

RHETT LOWDER

TEAM: REDS **AGE:** 23 **POS:** RHP



Drafted seventh overall in 2023 out of Wake Forest, Lowder finished 2024 in the big leagues and stands poised for a larger role in 2025. Lacking premium velocity or movement, he relies on hitting his spots and avoiding opponents' barrels. Lowder's touch on his pitches could make him a midrotation option as soon as this season.

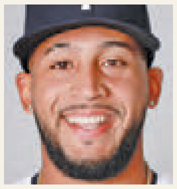
QUINN HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

1.17 *Lowder's ERA in six starts as a callup to Cincinnati last year. Among Reds debutants, only Tom Browning did better at 0.95.*

20

EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ

TEAM: TWINS **AGE:** 22 **POS:** OF



Rodriguez produces numbers that look like misprints. In 2024 he posted a .459 OBP via 51 walks in 47 games, mostly at Double-A, and he hits the ball as hard as any prospect. Health is his bugaboo. Rodriguez has topped 50 games in only one of his four pro seasons. If he stays on the field in 2025, he is poised to make his MLB debut.

NICK CAMMETT/DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

110.5 *The 90th percentile exit velocity recorded by Rodriguez in the minor leagues last season. That was tops among Top 100 Prospects.*

Christian Moore 2B, Angels | **Agustin Ramirez** C, Marlins | **Dalton Rushing** OF, Dodgers | **Tomoyuki Sugano** RHP, Orioles | **Trey Sweeney** SS, Tigers

MLB 100

Ranking the top 100 players in the major leagues

Through the years, Baseball America has evaluated the potential for thousands of prospects. Now for the third year in a row, we are carrying that exercise through to major league players.

This year, we sorted all MLB players by their role grades on the 20-80 scale and ranked the top 100. Players are ranked in terms of their projected 2025 impact only. No value beyond this season is factored into the grades presented here.

Explaining Role Grades

BA grades translate to the following major league roles. All MLB 100 players are graded 55 or higher.

Grade	Hitter	Starter	WAR Range
75–80	Franchise player	No. 1 starter	About 5.0 plus
65–70	Perennial all-star	No. 1/2 starter	About 4.0 to 4.9
60	Occasional all-star	No. 2/3 starter	About 3.5 to 3.9
55	First-division regular	No. 3/4 starter	About 3.0

Baseball America graded every big league regular during spring training for our MLB Preview. In building the MLB 100, we remained faithful to those grades and resulting rankings as much as possible. The MLB 100 order was determined by Matt Eddy, Geoff Pontes and Dylan White. Eddy wrote the capsules.

MILESTONEWATCH

BOSTON RED SOX
45 WINS FROM 10,000

At some point this season the Red Sox will clear 10,000 wins, making them the second American League team, following the Yankees, to clear the threshold.

Aaron Judge

XXXXX

80

75

2023 MLB PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Baseball America
THE GREATEST SHO ON EARTH
Ohtani

Baseball America
BLUE CHIP
Witt

1. SHOHEI OHTANI
DODGERS, DH/RHP

Age: 30

2024 ranking: 3. | **2023 ranking:** 1.

To watch Ohtani is to watch history. He was baseball's first 50-50 man and has won MVPs in three out of the past four seasons. In that time, Ohtani has averaged 45 homers and 29 steals per season while batting .286/.382/.602. On the mound he throws five plus pitch types: four-seamer, sinker, cutter, slider and splitter.

2. BOBBY WITT JR.
ROYALS, SS

Age: 25

2024 ranking: 9. | **2023 ranking:** 100.

Witt is *the* definitive five-tool player. He won the American League batting title and Gold Glove at shortstop last year. He is good for at least 30 homers and 30 steals annually. In fact, with two 30-30 seasons in his first three MLB seasons, he already has more than any shortstop in history.

3. AARON JUDGE
YANKEES, RF

Age: 33

2024 ranking: 7. | **2023 ranking:** 2.

As he embarks on his 10th season, Judge continues to push the bar higher. Since his 2016 debut, he leads all hitters with 315 homers and a 173 wRC+. Judge owns the AL record with 62 homers and has topped 50 three times. Only Babe Ruth, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa hit 50 more often.

4. GUNNAR HENDERSON
ORIOLES, SS

Age: 24

2024 ranking: 27. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

Corey Seager and Hall of Famer Arky Vaughan account for 11 of the top 20 best offensive seasons by lefthanded-hitting shortstops, according to the metric OPS+. Henderson crashed the party in 2024 by placing third on the list, and he figures to make many more entries with his elite bat and game-changing power.

5. JUAN SOTO
METS, RF

Age: 26

2024 ranking: 6. | **2023 ranking:** 13.

Soto drew 769 walks through his age-25 season, the highest total of all time. His 201 home runs rank seventh on that list. Soto would have pushed those totals even higher had he not lost 100 games to the shortened 2020 season. He embarks on the next phase of his career after signing a record contract with the Mets.

6. PAUL SKENES
PIRATES, RHP

Age: 23

2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

A three-time first-team All-American. A College World Series champion at LSU in 2023. The No. 1 overall draft pick later that year. The National League Rookie of the Year in 2024 after fashioning a 1.96 ERA in 133 innings. Skenes has accomplished a lot in his young career—and he's just getting started.

7. TARIK SKUBAL
TIGERS, LHP

Age: 28

2024 ranking: 33. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

Among the many reasons the Tigers were able to crash the 2024 postseason party ahead of schedule was Skubal's Cy Young Award season. His 2.39 ERA and MLB-leading 228 strikeouts fully confirmed his brilliant half-season in 2023 and pointed to a full recovery from flexor tendon surgery.

NEW YORK YANKEES/GETTY IMAGES

70

Julio Rodriguez

8. JOSE RAMIREZ

GUARDIANS, 3B

Age: 32

2024 ranking: 11. | **2023 ranking:** 6.

Ramirez is a third baseman without precedent. With six 20-homer, 20-steal seasons, he has double the number produced by Howard Johnson or Alex Rodriguez when they were third basemen. Ramirez has three top-three MVP finishes but no wins.

9. MOOKIE BETTS

DODGERS, SS

Age: 32

2024 ranking: 2. | **2023 ranking:** 4.

Betts has the type of profile that tends to age gracefully. He's capable of hitting .300, launching 35 bombs, stealing 20 bags and, apparently, playing any field position. Betts played primarily shortstop in 2024, and the Dodgers say that plan will continue.

10. FRANCISCO LINDOR

METS, SS

Age: 31

2024 ranking: 20. | **2023 ranking:** 25.

Lindor may be the most underrated player in MLB today. He ranks fourth in fWAR since joining the Mets in 2021, yet hasn't made an all-star team, won a Gold Glove or received his due for compiling five career 30-homer seasons.

11. ELLY DE LA CRUZ

REDS, SS

Age: 23

2024 ranking: 42. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

De La Cruz has one full MLB season under his belt and has flashed what he can do: hit at least 25 home runs, steal a major league-best 67 bases and hit about .260 despite a 31% strikeout rate. He also plays a lockdown shortstop.

12. JULIO RODRIGUEZ

MARINERS, CF

Age: 24

2024 ranking: 4. | **2023 ranking:** 11.

Paul Skenes and Elly De La Cruz have succeeded Rodriguez as the youngest players in the top tiers of this ranking, but J-Rod's potential remains immense even after a down 2024. He has the upside to reach 40-40 at peak with strong center field defense.

13. YORDAN ALVAREZ

ASTROS, LF

Age: 28

2024 ranking: 8. | **2023 ranking:** 9.

If Aaron Judge is the best *hitter* of the 2020s, then Alvarez is right there with Juan Soto and Shohei Ohtani as runners-up. He brings little to the table defensively, but the average Alvarez season since 2021 includes a .296/.387/.571 line with 34 homers.

14. KYLE TUCKER

CUBS, RF

Age: 28

2024 ranking: 12. | **2023 ranking:** 51.

Tucker will spend at least this season as the focal point of the Cubs' lineup. His superpower is that he does everything well, without necessarily being recognized as the best in any department. Tucker's 143 wRC+ since 2020 ranks ninth in MLB.

15. RONALD ACUÑA JR.

BRAVES, RF

Age: 27

2024 ranking: 1. | **2023 ranking:** 16.

Two of Acuña's past four seasons have been short-circuited by ACL reconstruction surgery, but when fully healthy in 2023 he authored the first-ever 40-homer, 70-steal season. Acuña will be back at full strength at some point this season.

Baseball America
HE'S THE 1!
PAYBALL!
Baseball America
ELITE
DE LA CRUZ

Acuña

De La Cruz

16. FERNANDO TATIS JR.

PADRES, RF

Age: 26

2024 ranking: 14. | **2023 ranking:** 29.

With one completely healthy season in the last four, Tatis has only teased at his upside since his epic introduction as a 2019 rookie. With 30-homer potential, a Gold Glove in right field and an elite arm, Tatis has the goods to be great.

17. COREY SEAGER

RANGERS, SS

Age: 31

2024 ranking: 26. | **2023 ranking:** 50.

Like Francisco Lindor, Seager is a bit of an overlooked shortstop superstar. His 2023 season was a masterpiece: .327 with 33 homers, 42 doubles and a 174 OPS+ that stands as the top single-season mark among qualified shortstops since integration.

18. ZACK WHEELER

PHILLIES, RHP

Age: 35

2024 ranking: 22. | **2023 ranking:** 31.

Few pitchers throw more fastball variants than Wheeler—and why not? Since joining the Phillies in 2020 he has a 2.94 ERA and leads all starters in WAR. While Wheeler doesn't have a Cy Young Award, he has pitched like a Hall of Famer in his early 30s.

MILESTONEWATCH

CHRIS BERNACCHI/DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

MOOKIE BETTS
29 HR FROM 300
12 SB FROM 200

Once Betts reaches 300 home runs and 200 stolen bases, he will join an exclusive club of active players—and fellow MVPs—Mike Trout and Andrew McCutchen.

65

19. WILLIAM CONTRERAS
BREWERS, C

Age: 27

2024 ranking: 44. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

20. VLADIMIR GUERRERO JR.
BLUE JAYS, 1B

Age: 26

2024 ranking: 58. | **2023 ranking:** 28.

21. KETEL MARTE
D-BACKS, 2B

Age: 31

2024 ranking: 53. | **2023 ranking:** 94.

22. AUSTIN RILEY
BRAVES, 3B

Age: 28

2024 ranking: 15. | **2023 ranking:** 19.

23. LOGAN GILBERT
MARINERS, RHP

Age: 28

2024 ranking: 38. | **2023 ranking:** 77.

24. ADLEY RUTSCHMAN
ORIOLES, C

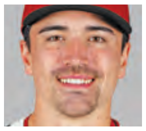
Age: 27

2024 ranking: 10. | **2023 ranking:** 43.

25. BRYCE HARPER
PHILLIES, 1B

Age: 32

2024 ranking: 30. | **2023 ranking:** 20.



26. CORBIN CARROLL
D-BACKS, RF

Age: 24

2024 ranking: 13. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

Corbin Burnes

27. JACKSON MERRILL
PADRES, CF

Age: 22

2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

28. FREDDIE FREEMAN
DODGERS, 1B

Age: 35

2024 ranking: 5. | **2023 ranking:** 18.

29. LOGAN WEBB
GIANTS, RHP

Age: 28

2024 ranking: 24. | **2023 ranking:** 70.

30. TREA TURNER
PHILLIES, SS

Age: 32

2024 ranking: 31. | **2023 ranking:** 10.

31. RILEY GREENE
TIGERS, LF

Age: 24

2024 ranking: 90. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

32. GARRETT CROCHET
RED SOX, LHP

Age: 26

2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

33. CAL RALEIGH
MARINERS, C

Age: 28

2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

TOP 25 PLAYERS 25-AND-UNDER

Twenty-one players in the MLB 100 are 25 years old or younger this season.

To highlight the best of next, here we sort the top young players into groups with their age peers.

An asterisk (*) denotes a player outside the MLB 100.

Age 25

Bobby Witt Jr.	SS	KC
Gabriel Moreno	C	ARI
Hunter Greene	RHP	CIN
Spencer Schwellenbach	RHP	ATL
*Austin Wells	C	NYY
*Colton Cowser	RF	BAL
*Mark Vientos	3B	NYM

Age 24

Gunnar Henderson	SS	BAL
Julio Rodriguez	CF	SEA
Corbin Carroll	RF	ARI
Riley Greene	LF	DET
Michael Harris II	CF	ATL
Zach Neto	SS	LAA
Anthony Volpe	SS	NYY
Lawrence Butler	RF	OAK

Age 23

Paul Skenes	RHP	PIT
Elly De La Cruz	SS	CIN
Wyatt Langford	LF	TEX
Masyn Winn	SS	STL
Roki Sasaki	RHP	LAD
*Ezequiel Tovar	SS	COL

Age 22

Jackson Merrill	CF	SD
James Wood	LF	WSH

Age 21

Jackson Chourio	RF	MIL
Junior Caminero	3B	TB

80 TOOLS: BEST OF THE BEST

Here are the players with the best tools in the MLB 100.

Hitting
- Yordan Alvarez
- Aaron Judge
- Shohei Ohtani
- Juan Soto

Power
- Aaron Judge
- Shohei Ohtani

Speed
- Corbin Carroll
- Elly De La Cruz
- Trea Turner
- Bobby Witt Jr.

Fielding
- Matt Chapman, 3B
- Andres Gimenez, 2B
- Steven Kwan, LF
- Francisco Lindor, SS
- Cal Raleigh, C
- Marcus Semien, 2B
- Dansby Swanson, SS
- Christian Walker, 1B
- Bobby Witt Jr., SS

Arm
- Ronald Acuña Jr., RF
- Elly De La Cruz, SS
- Gabriel Moreno, c
- Fernando Tatis Jr., RF
- Masyn Winn, SS

Fastball
- Logan Gilbert
- Hunter Greene
- Paul Skenes
- Zack Wheeler

Curveball
- Tyler Glasnow
- Aaron Nola
- Framber Valdez

Slider
- Dylan Cease
- Chris Sale

Changeup
- Kevin Gausman
- Cristopher Sanchez

Control
- George Kirby
- Logan Webb

34. MANNY MACHADO
PADRES, 3B

Age: 32

2024 ranking: 34. | **2023 ranking:** 5.

35. CORBIN BURNES
D-BACKS, RHP

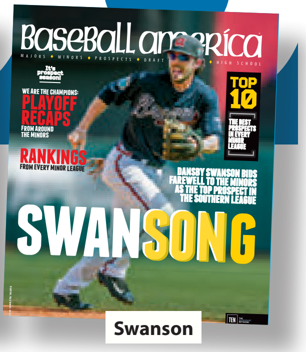
Age: 30

2024 ranking: 17. | **2023 ranking:** 14.

STEPH CHAMBERS/GETTY IMAGES (RODRIGUEZ), CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES (BURNES)

Baseball America
BREW MASTER

Chourio



Swanson

36. JACKSON CHOURIO
BREWERS, RF
Age: 21
2024 ranking: 85. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

37. MATT CHAPMAN
GIANTS, 3B
Age: 32
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

38. GEORGE KIRBY
MARINERS, RHP
Age: 27
2024 ranking: 21. | **2023 ranking:** 82.

39. MICHAEL HARRIS II
BRAVES, CF
Age: 24
2024 ranking: 43. | **2023 ranking:** 81.

40. CHRIS SALE
BRAVES, LHP
Age: 36
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

41. WILL SMITH
DODGERS, C
Age: 30
2024 ranking: 36. | **2023 ranking:** 53.

42. WILLY ADAMES
GIANTS, SS
Age: 29
2024 ranking: 89. | **2023 ranking:** 88.

43. RAFAEL DEVERS
RED SOX, 3B
Age: 28
2024 ranking: 47. | **2023 ranking:** 36.

44. FRAMBER VALDEZ
ASTROS, LHP
Age: 31
2024 ranking: 61. | **2023 ranking:** 40.

45. DANSBY SWANSON
CUBS, SS
Age: 31
2024 ranking: 54. | **2023 ranking:** 87.

46. COLE RAGANS
ROYALS, LHP
Age: 27
2024 ranking: 67. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

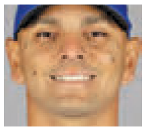
47. BLAKE SNELL
DODGERS, LHP
Age: 32
2024 ranking: 35. | **2023 ranking:** 72.

48. DYLAN CEASE
PADRES, RHP
Age: 29
2024 ranking: 70. | **2023 ranking:** 45.

49. MARCUS SEMIEN
RANGERS, 2B
Age: 34
2024 ranking: 29. | **2023 ranking:** 85.

50. WYATT LANGFORD
RANGERS, LF
Age: 23
2024 ranking: 65. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

51. JAZZ CHISHOLM JR.
YANKEES, 2B
Age: 27
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** 69.



52. ANDRES GIMENEZ
BLUE JAYS, 2B
Age: 26
2024 ranking: 88. | **2023 ranking:** 74.

53. GABRIEL MORENO
D-BACKS, C
Age: 25
2024 ranking: 76. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

54. YOSHINOBU YAMAMOTO
DODGERS, RHP
Age: 26
2024 ranking: 39. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

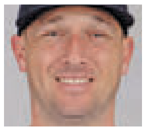
55. JARREN DURAN
RED SOX, LF
Age: 28
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

56. PABLO LOPEZ
TWINS, RHP
Age: 29
2024 ranking: 23. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

57. MIKE TROUT
ANGELS, RF
Age: 33
2024 ranking: 19. | **2023 ranking:** 3.

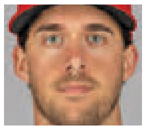
58. JACOB deGROM
RANGERS, RHP
Age: 37
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** 12.

59. STEVEN KWAN
GUARDIANS, LF
Age: 27
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** 90.



60. ALEX BREGMAN
RED SOX, 3B
Age: 31
2024 ranking: 57. | **2023 ranking:** 57.

61. MASYN WINN
CARDINALS, SS
Age: 23
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.



62. AARON NOLA
PHILLIES, RHP
Age: 32
2024 ranking: 60. | **2023 ranking:** 27.

63. MAX FRIED
YANKEES, LHP
Age: 31
2024 ranking: 45. | **2023 ranking:** 33.

64. TYLER GLASNOW
DODGERS, RHP
Age: 31
2024 ranking: 51. | **2023 ranking:** 48.

65. MICHAEL KING
PADRES, RHP
Age: 30
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

66. MATT OLSON
BRAVES, 1B
Age: 31
2024 ranking: 16. | **2023 ranking:** 35.

67. SONNY GRAY
CARDINALS, RHP
Age: 35
2024 ranking: 95. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

68. CRISTOPHER SANCHEZ
PHILLIES, LHP
Age: 28
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

MILESTONEWATCH

JAYNE KAMIN-ONCEA/GETTY IMAGES

BRUCE BOCHY
29 WINS FROM 2,200

Just five managers have eclipsed 2,200 wins in the history of the game. Bochy will pass Dusty Baker and Sparky Anderson on the all-time list this year—and if his Rangers win another World Series, he will move into a tie for third-most rings.

69. CHRISTIAN WALKER
ASTROS, 1B
Age: 34
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

70. BO BICHETTE
BLUE JAYS, SS
Age: 27
2024 ranking: 56. | **2023 ranking:** 60.

71. ONEIL CRUZ
PIRATES, CF
Age: 26
2024 ranking: 83. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

72. JORDAN WESTBURG
ORIOLES, 3B
Age: 26
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

73. SANDY ALCANTARA
MARLINS, RHP
Age: 29
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** 22.

74. JOSE ALTUVE
ASTROS, LF
Age: 35
2024 ranking: 32. | **2023 ranking:** 38.

75. KEVIN GAUSMAN
BLUE JAYS, RHP
Age: 34
2024 ranking: 41. | **2023 ranking:** 62.

76. ISAAC PAREDES
ASTROS, 3B
Age: 26
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

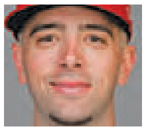
77. BRENT ROOKER
ATHLETICS, DH
Age: 30
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

78. XANDER BOGAERTS
PADRES, SS
Age: 32
2024 ranking: 78. | **2023 ranking:** 30.

79. HUNTER GREENE
REDS, RHP
Age: 25
2024 ranking: 99. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

80. JUSTIN STEELE
CUBS, LHP
Age: 29
2024 ranking: 37. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

81. ROKI SASAKI
DODGERS, RHP
Age: 23
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.



82. ZACH NETO
ANGELS, SS
Age: 24
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

83. SPENCER STRIDER
BRAVES, RHP
Age: 26
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** 49.

84. CARLOS CORREA
TWINS, SS
Age: 30
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** 24.

85. YAINER DIAZ
ASTROS, C
Age: 26
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

86. LUIS CASTILLO
MARINERS, RHP
Age: 32
2024 ranking: 25. | **2023 ranking:** 41.

87. TANNER BIBEE
GUARDIANS, RHP
Age: 26
2024 ranking: 74. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

88. ANTHONY VOLPE
YANKEES, SS
Age: 24
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

89. SEAN MURPHY
BRAVES, C
Age: 30
2024 ranking: 50. | **2023 ranking:** 78.

TWELVE WHO JUST MISSED

Veteran starting pitchers: Zach Eflin, RHP, Orioles; Seth Lugo, RHP, Royals; and Joe Ryan, RHP, Twins.

Veteran position players: Byron Buxton, CF, Twins; Willson Contreras, 1B, Cardinals; Ian Happ, LF, Cubs; and Kyle Schwarber, DH, Phillies.

Up-and-comers: Francisco Alvarez, C, Mets; Brenton Doyle, CF, Rockies; Shea Langeliers, C, Athletics; Mark Vientos, 3B Mets; and Austin Wells, C, Yankees.

90. FREDDY PERALTA
BREWERS, RHP
Age: 29
2024 ranking: 48. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

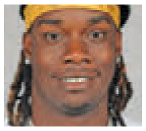
91. SPENCER SCHWELLENBACH
BRAVES, RHP
Age: 25
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

92. SHOTA IMANAGA
CUBS, LHP
Age: 31
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

93. PETE ALONSO
METS, 1B
Age: 30
2024 ranking: 49. | **2023 ranking:** 37.

94. HUNTER BROWN
ASTROS, RHP
Age: 26
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

95. JUNIOR CAMINERO
RAYS, 3B
Age: 21
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.



96. LAWRENCE BUTLER
ATHLETICS, RF
Age: 24
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

97. ANTHONY SANTANDER
BLUE JAYS, LF
Age: 30
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

98. JEREMY PEÑA
ASTROS, SS
Age: 27
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** 97.

99. JAMES WOOD
NATIONALS, LF
Age: 22
2024 ranking: NR. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

100. OZZIE ALBIES
BRAVES, 2B
Age: 28
2024 ranking: 40. | **2023 ranking:** NR.

BA BREAKOUT

JESS RAPFOGEL/GETTY IMAGES

James Wood
OF, Nationals

The 6-foot-7 Wood led all Triple-A prospects with a 176 wRC+ last season and then flashed exciting signs in Washington in the second half. While Wood's strikeout rate spiked against MLB pitchers, his hard-hit rate, chase rate and walk rate all looked good to go. Twenty-five homers and a .350 OBP are in play this season as a 22-year-old.

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Pete Crow-Armstrong
OF, Cubs

PCA is an elite defender in center field, but he hit just .237/.286/.384 last year in his first full MLB season. Now at age 23, he still has offensive potential. If he can unlock it, he will be one of the most valuable center fielders in the game.

CHRIS BERNACCHI/DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

Lawrence Butler
OF, Athletics

Butler was one of the hottest hitters in the second half of 2024, but he went largely unnoticed in Oakland. After being demoted to Triple-A in May, he worked on his mechanics and the results showed. Butler slashed .302/.346/.597 with 20 home runs and 49 RBIs in his final 73 games. Don't be surprised if the 24-year-old gets an all-star selection this year in his hometown of Atlanta.

NORM HALL/GETTY IMAGES

Michael Toglia
1B, Rockies

Toglia hits the ball very hard—when he makes contact. Once he settled in midway through 2024 he made better swing decisions and took plenty of walks. Sometimes, it just takes a while for long-levered switch-hitters.

NICK CAMMETT/DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

Junior Caminero
3B, Rays

Caminero missed a chunk of the 2024 minor league season with lower-body injuries, but he recovered to play in 43 games and showcase elite bat speed for Tampa Bay. He had an outstanding winter in the Dominican League and is still just 21 years old. Caminero might take some lumps early, but his elite impact potential will help him vault into the upper echelon of the sport, something the Rays need on a team devoid of offensive starpower.

MILESTONE WATCH

CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

CLAYTON KERSHAW
32 K FROM 3,000

Kershaw is back for one more year. The future Hall of Famer needs just 32 strikeouts to become the 20th pitcher ever to reach 3,000 strikeouts.

PLAYERS

We choose 10 young players—five hitters and five pitchers—poised to break out in 2025

MARK BLINCH/GETTY IMAGES

Ryan Weathers
LHP, Marlins

Weathers is showing a significant improvement to his fastball shape and some adjustments to his secondary mix. His four-seamer sits in the mid 90s and his changeup is showing a significant amount of vertical separation off his fastball. He's added a hard gyro slider as a bridge pitch between his fastball and sweeper.

BRANDON SLOTER/GETTY IMAGES

Cristopher Sanchez
LHP, Phillies

Sanchez has added 2 mph to his fastball this spring and has tinkered with a new cutter. With a competitive Phillies team supporting him, it's reasonably likely that Sanchez collects a few Cy Young Award votes.

JOHN FISHER/GETTY IMAGES

Brandon Pfaadt
RHP, D-Backs

The D-backs' rotation is one of the deepest in baseball, so it's easy for Pfaadt to get lost in the shuffle. He struggled when he first got called up in 2023 but stepped up when Arizona went on its Cinderella run to the World Series. In 2024 he showed flashes but just couldn't remain consistent. Pfaadt will get a long look this year.

MIKE JANES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES

Bubba Chandler
RHP, Pirates

The Pirates have done wonders with pitching in the last few years—perhaps you've heard of Paul Skenes and Jared Jones—and Chandler is the next up. He took off once he solely focused on pitching and is on the cusp of his big league debut.

DAVID J. GRIFFIN/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Spencer Schwellenbach
RHP, Braves

As a rookie last season, Schwellenbach impressed with his ability to work quickly, attack hitters and put them away. Atlanta may ask more out of him this season after losing veteran starters Max Fried and Charlie Morton. Schwellenbach is up for the task after brandishing six average-or-better pitches and showing one of the best swinging-strike rates among 25-and-under starters.

Milliken
CLUB

COURTESY OF HUB CITY SPARTANBURGERS

STEADY HAND

Even with three teams in new places—and new ballparks—this year, the minor leagues are in a period of unprecedented stability

by J.J. COOPER

With the arrival of stricter facility standards, the first wave of minor league relocations takes effect this season, with three teams moving to new cities and new ballparks. A fourth will follow in 2026.

The Braves' Double-A affiliate remains in the Southern League but moves from Pearl, Miss., to Columbus, Ga., and becomes the Columbus Clingstones. Atlanta now has all four full-season affiliates within the state of Georgia.

The Rangers' Low-A Down East franchise moves to Spartanburg, S.C., to become the Hub City Spartanburgers. The club also changes classification by moving from the Carolina League to the High-A South Atlantic League. Another Rangers affiliate, in Hickory, N.C., will drop to Low-A to even out the league alignments.

The Cubs' Double-A affiliate in Tennessee moves 40 miles down the road from Sevierville to a new ballpark in Knoxville. They will still play as the Smokies, but the city name will change from Tennessee to Knoxville.

There will be movement next year as well. The Brewers' Low-A Carolina affiliate will move 30 miles from Zebulon, N.C., to Wilson, N.C., to become the Wilson Warbirds.

In the California League, the Dodgers will move to a new stadium set to open in 2026 in Ontario, Calif. That will lead to the Angels assuming Rancho Cucamonga as its affiliate, while the Mariners will take Inland Empire once it is vacated by the Angels. The Mariners' former Modesto affiliate will drop out of the Cal League.

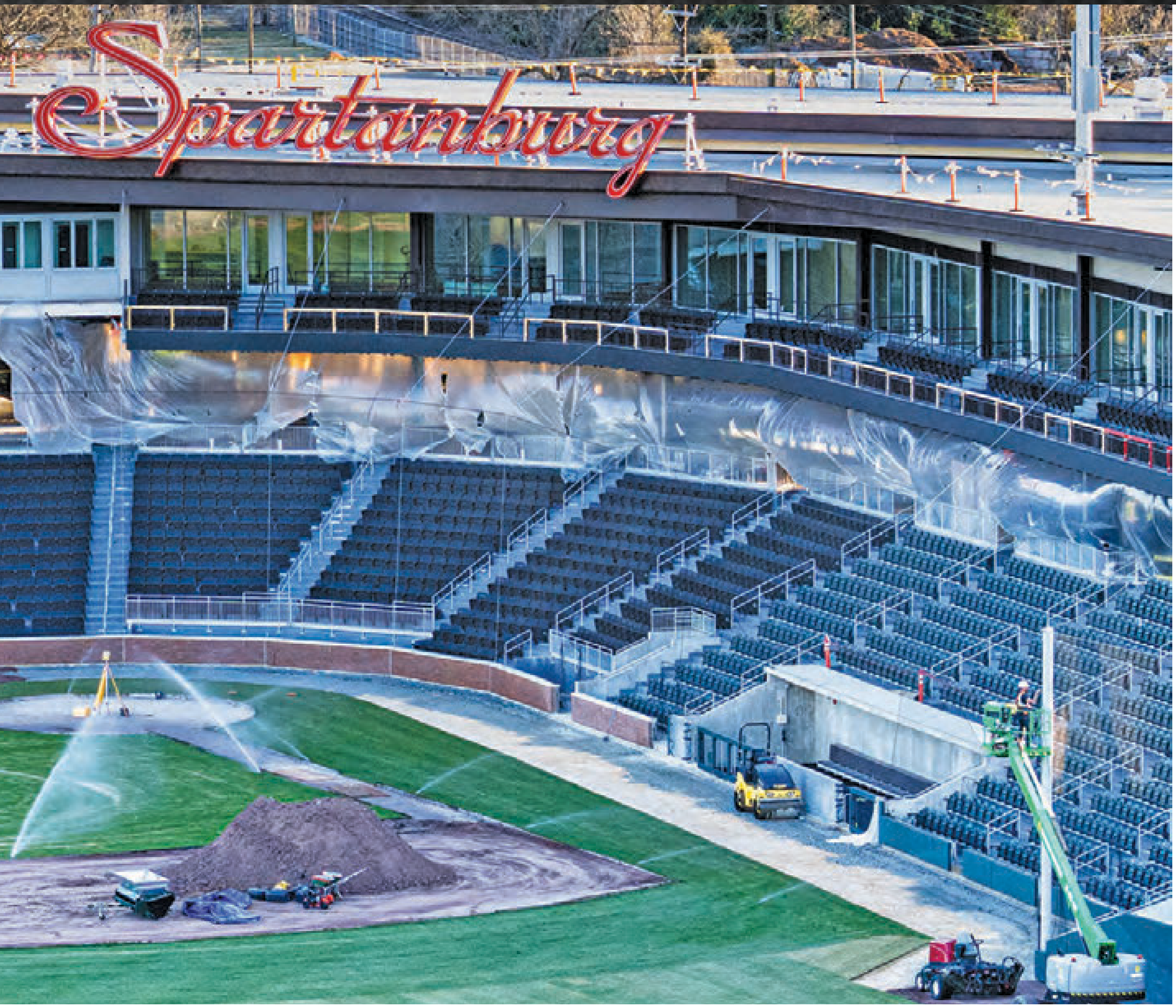
But when compared to past decades, the stability of the minor leagues in the 2020s has been remarkable.

When MLB took over the minor leagues in late 2020, it did so with the most dramatic change the minors had seen in half a century. It could be argued that it was the most monumental change in minor league history. MLB eliminated the short-season Class A and Rookie-advanced levels, which led to more than 40 teams being pushed out of affiliated ball.

For the 120 remaining full-season teams, the past four seasons have been the most stable period in minor league history.

Continuous churn has long been part of the minor league experience. Affiliation agreements used to be set in two-year increments, ensuring that every other offseason would include MLB teams and minor league clubs playing a game of musical chairs. And for most of minor league history, there has been a steady stream of movement from city to city, as teams looked for better stadium deals and better markets.

But from 2021 to 2024, the remaining teams



Fifth Third Park in Spartanburg, S.C., will host the Hub City Spartanburgers, the Rangers' new High-A affiliate.

operated in the longest period of franchise stability the minor leagues have ever seen.

Part of that is by design. The biennial affiliation shuffle has been replaced by 10-year Professional Development Licenses. Today, an affiliate shifting from one MLB organization to another doesn't happen. The three-team Cal League swap for next year is the rare exception.

But the lack of teams changing cities is a new development. Normally enhanced facility standards requirements, have led to large-scale movement of minor league teams around the sport.

The last significant facility standards upgrade, in the 1990s, led to a dramatic number of franchise shifts. Cities with older stadiums found themselves shut out by the increased field and clubhouse requirements. It also led to a building boom that saw minor league attendance skyrocket.

This time, there is plenty of construction going on, with some teams getting new stadiums and many getting upgrades to their current parks. But the franchise movement seen in the past has been remarkably modest for a major facility standards change.

From 1991 to 1995, 23 minor league teams moved to new cities. If you expand to 1997, that number jumps to 28.

This time, the changes between 2021 to 2025 are four. Even with some more movement scheduled for upcoming years, by 2027 the number of teams changing cities will remain in the single digits.

That's more in line with what was seen from 2011 to 2015—with no significant changes to facility standards in the Professional Baseball Agreement—when three teams moved. And it's fewer than 2001 to 2005—again in a time of no facility standard changes—when nine teams moved.

So while seeing relocated teams in Columbus, Knoxville and Spartanburg might hint at minor league instability, it is nothing like the movement created by the facility standards upgrades that took effect 35 years ago.

In the minor leagues today, the biggest change is that there is no change. ■

NEW FOR 2025

MISSISSIPPI BRAVES NOW THE COLUMBUS CLINGSTONES

→

DOWN EAST WOOD DUCKS NOW THE HUB CITY SPARTANBURGERS

→

TENNESSEE SMOKIES NOW THE KNOXVILLE SMOKIES

→

OKLAHOMA CITY BASEBALL CLUB NOW THE OKLAHOMA CITY COMETS

→

BOWIE BAYSOX NOW THE CHESAPEAKE BAYSOX

→

NEW LOGOS FOR SALT LAKE, CORPUS CHRISTI AND LAKE COUNTY

→

→

→

MINOR LEAGUE TEAMS SHOW BRAND AWARENESS
NEXT PAGE

JUMPING ON THE BRAND WAGON

Alternate identities give minor league teams a chance to launch a temporary rebrand, generate interest and sell merchandise.

by J.J. COOPER

Minor league teams used to goose merchandise sales and fan interest by undertaking a rebranding.

Have a logo that's a little old in the tooth or a tad stale?

No problem. Hold a contest to rebrand the team, which gets some local attention. Winnow down to a few names, one of which is so outlandish that you make fans upset that you are even considering it.

Then you select a tamer, but still slightly edgy or off-the-wall nickname guaranteed to get some fans to complain about how you've harmed your legacy. Sometimes, you pick a name that was never made public.

After a few days of modest outrage, most everyone decides they like the new logo and nickname, and the team rakes in the increased merchandise sales, while also hopefully bringing more fans to the park, spurred by the offseason discussion that drove brand awareness.

There's only one problem with the rebrand plan. You only get one shot. So choose wisely.

While rebrands usually do wonders in the short term, whatever new identity a minor league team picks is something they are going to have to live with for years.

And some teams have a brand so iconic that they are never going to change. The Toledo Mud Hens have been the Mud Hens for more than 125 years. Don't expect the Durham Bulls to take down the "Hit Bull, Win Steak" sign anytime soon either.

In the 2020s, however, we are deep in the age of the alternate identity, which allows teams to get the best of both worlds. They keep their long-time brand, but now they can also grab attention, merchandise sales and a bit of fun by embracing an alternate identity for a few games a year.

It's like getting the sugar high from a tasty desert without having to worry about the calories. Teams can be more daring and more innovative because the change isn't permanent. It's a temporary tattoo that can be washed off in time for your next homestand.

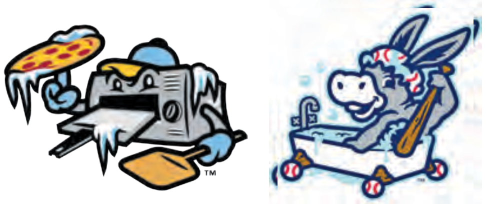
There's a healthy debate about who rolled out the first alternate identity, but it's safe to say that the Fresno Grizzlies' alternate identity of the Fresno Tacos helped pave the way in the mid 2010s.

Soon, almost every minor league team in the country realized that the alternate identity unlocked all kinds of benefits.

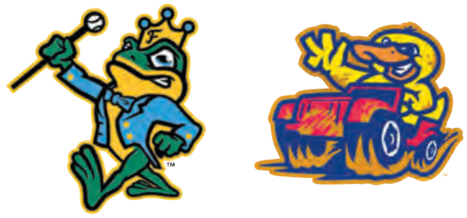
"If you're a regular team, how many posts am I going to make all year that will be seen nationally and internationally," Winston-Salem Dash general manager/president Brian DeAngelis said. "How many opportunities will I have to sell merchandise in all 50 states? This gives you a chance to try something new."

The Dash have the Hooch Pooches this year, but in 2023, they rolled out the Hype Hens, which proved to be one of the best selling minor league hats that season.

So this year will see the Binghamton Bathtub Donkeys, Hartford Thunder Chickens, Hickory Goat-Karts. The battle for cutest dog logo will be held between Arkansas' Barkansas Dizzys and the equally adorable Hudson Valley Retrievers.



New alternate identities: Wisconsin Frozen Pizzas, Binghamton Bathtub Donkeys, Toledo Mud Crawlers and Fredericksburg Frogs



Eugene Exploding Whales (left) and Winston-Salem Blue vs. Green Bubble alternate identities.

These alternate identities have ranged from a chance to honor a local star—Round Rock has turned into the Ryan Express 34's. It can be anything a team can imagine.

Wisconsin has been the Supper Clubbers, featuring a classy drink in a tuxedo, and will now be the slightly-less-upscale Frozen Pizzas.

Food is a key part of alternate identities. There have been the Peoria Pork Tenderloins, the Maine Whoopie Pies, the Reading Flapjacks, Rochester Plates—it's a regional delicacy, not just a plate—Round Rock Briskets, Nashville Hot Chickens, Memphis Dry Rubs/Wet Ribs, Springfield Cashew Chicken, Wichita Chili Buns, Wisconsin Brats and Omaha Runzas just to name a few.

This year, Fayetteville will honor the nearby Army base with the Fayetteville Black Ops and the Eighty Deuces, which is an homage to the 82nd Airborne Division.

There are opportunities to honor Negro League teams, like the Durham Black Sox, Akron Black Tyrites and Dallas Black Giants. And there are alternate identities for the 95 teams participating in *Copa de la Diversión*.

And then there are the one-offs that probably wouldn't work for a full season but are perfect for one night. The Pensacola Mullets, Hickory Dickory Docks and Eugene Exploding Whales are probably best in limited exposure, but you will see mullet hats all around the country.

It's also something that teams can sell. Last year, Oatly sponsored an alternate identity for every team in the minors, as the Malmo Oat Milkers were the alt identity of each and every full-season club at some point in 2024.

Not all alternate identities work. DeAngelis thought he had a winner when Winston-Salem rolled out the Flights—a nod to the "First In Flight" motto of North Carolina as well as a chance to tie in flights of beer—but it fell flat.

If its had been a rebrand of the team, it would have been disastrous. As a temporary alternate identity, it just meant it was time to go back to the drawing board, which led to the Winston-Salem Hype Hens.

The door has been flung wide open. Minor league teams get to flaunt their creativity with alternate identities in a way never before possible. And at this point, they are unlikely to ever go back. ■

ISAAC WASSERMAN/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (WHALES), BRIAN WESTERHOLT/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (DASH)

American League

ORGANIZATION REPORTS

- *The Yankees were thrilled by the glovework of 2023 first-round shortstop George Lombard Jr. last season. Now, they want to help him find the next gear at the plate.* **PAGE 66**

PAGE 64 Fifth overall pick Hagen Smith will focus on developing a third pitch and building his workload in his first full season with the White Sox.

BRIAN WESTERHOLT/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (SMITH), TOM DIPACE (LOMBARD)

Hard Work Delivers Thomas To Cusp Of MLB

It doesn't take long to notice **Colby Thomas'** competitive edge on defense. His football background plays a big part.

The 24-year-old corner outfielder is perhaps a little too aggressive in certain aspects. He admits to being undefeated making contact against the outfield wall as he makes plays.

When others describe Thomas, his play-hard mentality is the characteristic that comes up most often.

Across Double-A Midland and Triple-A Las Vegas last season, he made an impression at the plate. He wanted to improve his power after being doubles-heavy in 2023.

In a 2024 season that culminated with recognition as the organization's minor league player of the year, Thomas hit .277/.342/.563 with 31 homers and 15 steals.

Coming out of spring a year ago, the Mercer alum also upped his bat-to-ball skills, which the Athletics organization takes pride in improving.

Thomas stuck out nearly 25% of the time in 2024, but that was down a tick from 2023. The A's appear unfazed and expect him to compete for big league time this season.

"Colby's a competitor and wants to do well and wants to get to the big leagues," A's farm director **Ed Sprague** said. "And I think he knows that one of his things is to cut down a little bit on the swing-and-miss and the strikeouts. He takes a pretty healthy cut at it."

Those big cuts also lead to big-time power from the 2022 third-rounder.

"You first look at him, you look at the home run power," Sprague said. "But I think defensively he's really good and he's an above-average runner."

—JESSICA KLEINSCHMIDT

The Athletics' Colby Thomas successfully reined in his strikeout rate and produced more power in the upper minors.

Basallo Continues To Learn From Teammates

An elbow injury last spring meant catcher **Samuel Basallo** was on the periphery of his first major league spring training.

This time around, the 20-year-old's involvement in camp was the beginning of what should be a year of exposure to experienced major leaguers and veteran players who can help round out the game of one of the brightest young hitting talents in the game.

"The next iteration in his development is having to go about your day-to-day entirely surrounded by upper-level players, and (see) how they carry themselves, and what it means to be calm and steady and level-headed throughout the course of a long up-and-down season," Orioles farm director **Anthony Villa** said.

"We've seen what the physical skills look like, and they're incredible. We know that with any young player, the mental and emotional maturity continues to grow and develop, and there's going to be challenges up ahead.

"But for him to be in the presence of more veteran players is really important for his development."

Such progress has been an important part of Basallo's climb to the majors. He burst onto the scene by hitting 20 homers with a .953 OPS at three levels as an 18-year-old in 2023.

He paired an .820 OPS with 16 home runs at Double-A Bowie last year before spending September at Triple-A Norfolk.

It was an up and down year, and Basallo—who can be hard on himself—had to learn to cope with struggles that didn't appear at lower levels.

With Basallo set to start this season at Norfolk, he'll likely share a clubhouse with players anywhere from five to 10 years older than him. The Orioles want him to combine those high expectations he has for himself with the steadiness his experienced teammates will demonstrate.

"We want him to continue to stay true to himself with these high and heavy expectations," Villa said, "but we do want him to also give himself a little grace and understand that he's a 20-year-old."

—JON MEOLI

Arias Grows Into Power In Big 2024 Season

Franklin Arias displayed a number of impressive traits in his pro debut in 2023. As a 17-year-old in the Dominican Summer League, he showed the fluidity and range of a true shortstop while also flashing excellent contact skills and a discerning eye.

But while his all-fields, line-drive approach established a solid baseline, power wasn't at all a part of his game.

That changed in 2024, when Arias dominated in the Florida Complex League by hitting .355/.471/.584 with six home runs in 51 games before a solid 36-game showing at Low-A Salem.

That, in tandem with his strong defensive profile, has the 19-year-old Arias zooming up prospect rankings.

"It's a huge step," Arias said of his 2024 improvement. "I didn't expect such a big jump."

The righthanded-batting Arias entered pro ball with an approach suited to hitting line drives to right-center field—an approach that served him well in terms of his pitch recognition and contact. But he had added considerable lean muscle since signing at 5-foot-11, 145 pounds.

He had grown to 170 pounds by the 2024 season.

That added strength, in combination with bat-speed training and cage work that better positioned him to take risks pulling the ball in the air, positioned Arias to start slugging the ball.

That newfound ability was most evident during an extraordinary 27-game stretch in which he hit .434/.527/.736 with six homers and 22 steals—a run that earned him MVP honors in the FCL.

Arias—whose impressive defensive footwork and balance on both sides of the ball reflect his soccer-playing upbringing in Venezuela—hit the ball hard with surprising frequency given that he's a shortstop with plenty of room to fill out.

His 90th percentile exit velocity in 2024 was 102.6 mph. His max was 109.5 mph.

Those marks point to a profile that now projects to feature average or better grades for all five tools, positioning Arias as a standout prospect.

—ALEX SPEIER

Smith Stands Poised For First Full Season

In striking out nearly half of his Southeastern Conference opponents last year in his first season in the Arkansas rotation, lefthander **Hagen Smith** presents the White Sox with a narrow path to tread.

"From a skill-set standpoint, he could pitch in the big leagues probably pretty soon, assuming health," White Sox farm director **Paul Janish** said.

In sending Smith straight to High-A Winston-Salem to make his pro debut over three short outings, the White Sox didn't expect the 21-year-old to be challenged, but they wanted to gauge the fifth overall pick's workload capacity.

"He didn't say it, but you could tell his body was kind of out of gas," White Sox pitching coordinator **Matt Zaleski** said. "He was going from September of (2023), and not having him (at instructional league) was just giving his body a little bit of a break."

The White Sox have roughly 110 innings in mind for Smith this season, which is a small bump from 91.2 he shouldered between college and pro ball in 2024.

But if his mid-90s fastball with rising and running life and high-80s sweeper are restored to last year's heights, he could power his way quickly through the minors.

As shown last year with **Jairo Iriarte** and **Jake Eder**, White Sox senior advisor to pitching **Brian Bannister** is fond of introducing starters to the majors with late-season auditions in the bullpen.

Nodding to the strength of Smith's heater and slider, Zaleski and Bannister have cautioned against viewing a changeup as mandatory for the lefty's long-term success.

Not wanting to alter Smith's supination bias, Bannister has suggested his third pitch could wind up being a cutter or slow curveball.

This winter, Smith decided to simply work on both pitches. He spent his offseason working on a splitter—a pitch that does not require him to pronate—alongside a cutter he said has looked as good as any pitch in his bullpens.

—JAMES FEGAN

Genao Checks Many Boxes For Guardians

Angel Genao stepped up his game in 2024 to become perhaps the Guardians' top shortstop-of-the-future candidate.

At any point along the continuum that is the Guardians' seemingly endless stable of middle infield prospects, there invariably are a few who seem to check most—if not all—of the boxes.

One of the box-checkers is 6-foot, 165-pound shortstop **Angel Genao**, who shined brightly at two stops in 2024 and finished the season with High-A Lake County, BA's Minor League Team of the Year.

Signed by the Guardians out of the Dominican Republic in 2021, Genao wasted little time in announcing his arrival by slashing .322/.394/.416 in the Arizona Complex League in 2022.

Genao scuffled through an injury-plagued season at Low-A Lynchburg in 2023 before mastering the level at the outset of 2024. He continued to torment pitchers in the Midwest League following his June promotion.

The switch-hitter slashed .330/.379/.499 with 10 home runs and 25 stolen bases in 110 games between the two stops.

Genao, who turns 21 this season, also offers defensive versatility. Last season, he started 73 games at shortstop, 19 at second base and 13 at third base.

"His athleticism, quickness and change of direction project best at shortstop," Guardians assistant GM **James Harris** said, "but he continues to develop arm strength and touch to play second and third.

"He has the speed to be a threat on the bases and is developing game awareness and decision-making to add to his toolbox."

Genao's power is starting to show as well. After hitting a combined nine home runs in his first three seasons, he hit 10 in 2024.

"Offensively, Angel is aggressive in the zone with an elite ability to make contact," Harris said. "He is gaining strength with our strength and conditioning team and really connected with hitting coach **Odomar Valdez** to identify pitches that he can drive."

—JIM INGRAHAM

McGonigle Sticks With What Works

When it comes to minor league players experimenting with mechanical changes, some go the route of major adjustments, while others keep it simple.

For 20-year-old shortstop **Kevin McGonigle**, if it ain't broke, don't stress about it.

In fact, since growing up in Delaware County, just outside Philadelphia, he said he hasn't really changed much of anything about his lefthanded swing.

"I would say my whole life I've had the same stance, same toe taps," McGonigle said. "I haven't really changed anything, which I think helps me. I don't like digging into a lot of mechanical changes.

"I feel like I keep it really simple at the plate. I would also watch film on **Chase Utley** and **Tony Gwynn**."

Drafted 37th overall in 2023 out of Monsignor Bonner High, McGonigle got his first look at the Florida State League in a 12-game stretch to end the 2023 season.

In his return to Low-A Lakeland in 2024, McGonigle began to attract attention. He slashed .326/.407/.470 with four home runs and 20 stolen bases in 60 games to earn a promotion to High-A West Michigan in July.

But three weeks into his Midwest League campaign, McGonigle's momentum shifted.

"It was funny. That day, (**Jim**) **Jarvis** and I were talking about hamate bones for some reason," McGonigle said. "Then my first at-bat—I think it was my third swing—I felt a pop, and my ring finger and pinkie went numb.

"I was like, 'I know exactly what that is.'"

A successful surgery and full rehabilitation have McGonigle ready to get back to work in Lakeland this spring.

That includes extensive infield work with Tigers roving instructor **Alan Trammell**.

"I feel like all parts of my game could use work," McGonigle said. "My main focus is my pre-pitch (defensive setup).

"I talked with the Tigers, and we went over my profile, and I was struggling with my reaction off the bat. So I've been working on my pre-pitch and messing around with different techniques."

—EMILY WALDON

Trade Pickup Smith Brings Excitement

Exactly one month after he was acquired from the Cubs, 22-year-old third baseman **Cam Smith** made a good impression on the Astros when he reported to West Palm Beach, Fla., for an early minicamp with his new organization.

He was one of 50 minor leaguers—and the top prospect—present.

"He showed up ready to work, and that's exciting to see," Astros senior director of player development **Jacob Buffa** said.

The Astros were excited to add Smith to their system after acquiring him along with all-star third baseman **Isaac Paredes** in the **Kyle Tucker** trade. The Cubs drafted Smith 14th overall out of Florida State.

Smith signed early enough to play 32 games in his pro debut, reaching Double-A Tennessee for a week. At three minor league levels, he hit .313/.396/.609 with seven home runs in 32 games.

"From a performance standpoint, the thing that jumps out about Smith is the combination of contact and power," Buffa said. "There's not that many young athletes who can hit the ball as hard as he does and as often as he does.

"I do think, in speaking with him, the one thing that stands out is that there just seems to be a plus-plus makeup from this kid. He's already willing to do anything that we ask."

Astros GM **Dana Brown**, who made his name as a scout, saw Smith last year at FSU.

"Cam Smith is an impact bat with power," Brown said.

Brown says the Astros will likely play Smith at third base, first base and right field this season.

"If his bat comes really quickly, we'll move him quickly," Brown said. "Whichever position he's playing the best, we'll probably put him at that position as he moves up . . .

"He's a really good first-round college bat with power and a chance to hit. He's pretty athletic as well. We're really excited about Cam Smith."

—JOSE DE JESUS ORTIZ

Caglianone Focuses On Shrinking His Zone

The Royals went under slot to sign first-rounders **Frank Mozzicato** and **Blake Mitchell** in the 2021 and 2023 drafts.

Kansas City played the sixth overall pick in the 2024 draft straight up, paying a full slot bonus of nearly $7.5 million to Florida

JOHN WILLIAMSON/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (THOMAS), EDDIE KELLY (GENAO)

first baseman **Jac Caglianone**, one of the premier college sluggers in the class.

While the Royals need another power bat in their everyday lineup, there's no set time frame for Caglianone to get to Kansas City.

"From a timeline standpoint, it's hard to say, as with all players," Royals farm director and field coordinator **Mitch Maier** said, "but we know he's extremely talented. We know what he did in college, and we anticipate him being a part of our future for a long time.

"But we've got to go through the steps and make sure he gets the at-bats and the reps."

Caglianone's primary areas for improvement are pitch recognition and reducing his chase rate against breaking pitches. His aptitude for change was evident in college. He significantly reduced his strikeout rate and increased his walk rate as a junior.

"He's shown the ability already to do that again," Maier said, "some via coaching, some of it naturally through his own adjustability."

"His focus going into the offseason was continuing to make sure that we're tightening up that zone," Royals director of hitting performance **Drew Saylor** said, "and that we're swinging at pitches that we can do something with.

"There's a little bit of a swing adaptation that we're going through, just to make sure we keep his weight more in the middle of his body. He's so physically strong and physically talented (that) he kind of rushes to the front side of his body, and that's what ends up causing some of this mishit balls."

Saylor believes this change will allow Caglianone to make better swing decisions.

"I know that shrinking the zone is going to play a big role in it and being OK with taking walks," Caglianone said. "One thing with me is I always try to produce, and that's going be my role."

—BILL MITCHELL

Moore Sets Sights On Opening Day Roster

Angels first-rounders **Zach Neto** and **Nolan Schanuel** were the first players from the 2022 and 2023 drafts, respectively, to reach the big leagues. Now, a 2024 first-rounder appears destined to follow suit.

Drafted eighth overall out of Tennessee, **Christian Moore** drew one step closer when he was announced as a non-roster invite to big league spring training.

The 22-year-old second baseman knew his pace could be quick, but this quick?

"I knew I got drafted into an organization where I can move up fast if I perform well, but I didn't think it was going to be two days," Moore said of his time at Low-A Inland Empire after the draft.

Drafted eighth overall in 2024, second baseman Christian Moore knows he has a chance to ride a fast track to Anaheim.

He continued his hot start with Double-A Rocket City, hitting five home runs in 23 games. Speculation that Moore would reach Anaheim before the end of the 2024 season was quashed after he suffered a left meniscus injury that sidelined him for two weeks.

"Any time you take a guy you want him to go out and do well," Angels scouting director **Tim McIlvaine** said, "and I thought (Christian) did as well as you could."

Moore spent his first professional offseason facing live pitching and taking ground balls at a new position: third base, which he began playing at instructional league.

"I want to go (to camp) and prove to them that I had a good offseason and leave it up to God—and the work I put in—and see where they put me," Moore said.

Angels second basemen produced the least offense in the majors in 2024. Third base wasn't much more productive.

The Angels signed veterans **Yoan Moncada** and **Kevin Newman** to compete for starting jobs, but Moore is solidly in the mix. He may be young, but he is confident.

"Truthfully, that's all I think about," Moore said of making the Opening Day roster. "That's my goal. I feel like if you don't (want it), you're selling yourself short."

—TAYLOR BLAKE WARD

Rodriguez's Unique Profile Nears MLB

The Twins are grateful that 22-year-old outfielder **Emmanuel Rodriguez** grew up in the Dominican Republic, where he never had a chance to play American football.

Otherwise, Twins manager **Rocco Baldelli** believes, Rodriguez might be wearing shoulder pads and a helmet today.

Rodriguez's thighs "are the size of **Emmitt Smith's**," Baldelli said in reference to the NFL's all-time leading rusher after watching Rodriguez crush a long spring training home run against all-star closer **Craig Kimbrel** a season ago. "He's a tank."

Those tank treads—er, muscular legs—may drive E-Rod, as his teammates sometimes call him, to Target Field sometime in 2025.

Rodriguez was limited to just 47 games in 2024 because of a nagging thumb injury that made swinging a bat painful. But offseason surgery, "sort of a clean-up procedure," according to Twins president of baseball operations **Derek Falvey**, has solved the problem.

Now, Falvey said, "I'm excited about spring training and seeing a healthy version on him with a little taste of Triple-A—what that could look like."

If it looks anything like the progress he showed when healthy in 2024, Rodriguez could find himself in the Twins' lineup by midseason.

The center fielder opened last season with two incredible months at the plate for Double-A Wichita that produced a .298/.479/.621 batting line with eight home runs and nine stolen bases in 37 games.

Perhaps even more impressive, Falvey said, was his plate discipline. Rodriguez drew walks in 25% of his plate appearances and refuses to chase out of the zone.

"(Rodriguez) has such a unique profile. It's almost impossible to look at that profile and say how it's going to translate to the big leagues, because no one else has it," Falvey said. "That ability to hit for power but also get on base so much, he's a lot closer than we think."

—PHIL MILLER

Lombard Could Be Next Breakout Infielder

Come on down, **George Lombard Jr.**

The 19-year-old is the next highly-regarded high school shortstop the Yankees are working to develop into a future big leaguer.

New York used the 26th pick in the 2023 draft to secure Lombard, the son of the former big leaguer of the same name, signing him for $3.3 million out of Gulliver Prep in Pinecrest, Fla.

Lombard drew raves for his defensive play in 2024, which he spent primarily with Low-A Tampa until a late promotion to High-A Hudson Valley. He is the Yankees' top defensive infielder on the farm, though the 6-foot-3, 190-pound righthanded hitter has work to do at the dish.

Lombard batted .231/.338/.334 with five home runs and 39 stolen bases in 110 games last season, showing a disciplined approach with 61 walks.

He played second and third base in addition to shortstop at Tampa before focusing solely on short at Hudson Valley.

Lombard made a big first impression with his bat in his first big league spring training last year. He hit an opposite-field homer in the Yankees' Grapefruit League opener. That wasn't entirely sustainable, though it did provide a valuable learning experience.

"That was awesome," Lombard said in August. "Being in my first spring training and then getting to go over to the big league side and get to play some games with them and be on the field with some of those guys who are household names, those were some great experiences.

"That first game was pretty memorable with that at-bat."

The organization will continue to work with Lombard to add more loft to his mostly flat swing to unlock some more power after he hit a high rate of ground balls last year.

—MIKE ASHMORE

Celesten Takes Things One Day At A Time

For someone with just 32 games of professional experience, 19-year old shortstop **Felnin Celesten** has created quite a buzz.

Since signing out of the Dominican Republic in 2023 for $4.7 million, the highest bonus the franchise has ever paid for an international amateur, Celesten has provided Seattle with exciting glimpses of talent—when healthy.

After missing 2023, Celesten was plagued with injuries again in 2024, this time a bad hamstring and season-ending hamate bone surgery. But when he was in the lineup, he hit .352/.431/.568 with three home runs in 144 plate appearances in the Rookie-level Arizona Complex League.

"I've been just incredibly excited about it," Mariners minor league hitting coordinator **C.J. Gillman** said. "It's just more expectation management. Every time the kid touches the field, he's electric. And so the fact that he's missed a couple chunks of time has been, I think, really hard on him."

Gillman's biggest challenge is keeping Celesten present at the moment. He's got plenty of pop, but Gillman doesn't want Celesten to try too hard to hit for power so he can get to the big leagues sooner.

"My job is to help him recognize all those things, compartmentalize all those things, and understand that the best way to get there the fastest is to just get better today and just stack a good brick," Gillman said.

"You'll get there when you're supposed to get there."

—SHANE LANTZ

Gill Hill Thrives With Change To Arm Slot

After watching the progress **Gary Gill Hill** made last season, it's easy to see why the Rays are excited about the 20-year-old righthander's progress and career track.

In spring training 2024, Rays staffers talked to Gill Hill about adjustments he should make to his delivery and arm slot heading into his first full season. The 2022 sixth-rounder out of the New York high school ranks was all ears.

The Rays saw something in Gary Gill Hill he could change for 2024. The results were startling as he shined at Low-A.

"He took to those changes almost immediately, and we saw a player halfway through spring training who was so much better of a version of himself than he was in the FCL the prior year," Rays assistant GM **Kevin Ibach** said.

Gill Hill carried that momentum into the season.

In 108.2 innings for Low-A he recorded a 3.15 ERA with 105 strikeouts and 27 walks. He started the team's playoff opener.

Also telling was how Gill Hill got there by buying in fully to the suggested changes.

"Going to his first full-season level, the intent, the strike-throwing—not to mention the stuff—the maturity, just the way he carried himself was pretty impressive for a teenage prospect," Ibach said. "But more so just because of where he came from a year ago.

"He took one of the biggest steps forward as anyone in the organization."

Gill Hill said the biggest difference was the tweaks he made to his arm slot. He went from sidearm to more of a three-quarters slot, which in turn increased his velocity.

Gill Hill said he was most pleased with how much he pitched, noting he had never worked more than 100 innings in a season at any level.

"Doing this for the first time felt really good," he said. "And now I know what to expect (this) season, trying to do the same thing, so I can build out even more strength to get even more (innings) later on."

—MARC TOPKIN

Rosario Looks To 2026 To Get Back On Mound

The undisputed breakthrough player last season in the Rangers' system was righthander **Alejandro Rosario**. Heck, he was one of the game's biggest breakthroughs in 2024.

Drafted in the fifth round in 2023 despite posting a 7.11 ERA in his final season at Miami, Rosario pitched to a 2.24 ERA across two Class A levels in 2024 and struck out 129 in 88.1 innings while walking just 13.

He did it with upper-90s velocity and a splitter that kept opposing hitters flailing.

The Rangers invited the 23-year-old Rosario to big league spring training for the first time. The expectation is he will become a fixture in their rotation.

"It feels like I accomplished something this past offseason, but the job's not done," Rosario said. "It's easy to have one good year.

"Now, what I'm trying to focus on is being more consistent and doing these things for the longevity of my career."

The future, however, will have to wait. Rosario suffered an injury early in spring training that required elbow surgery. He will miss all of the 2025 season and possibly part of 2026 as well.

When he returns, Rosario's next stop will likely be Double-A, and the organization has a fine blueprint to follow after the recovery and resurgence of **Kumar Rocker**, the organization's top prospect.

After a circuitous route to pro ball, Rocker was dominating High-A competition before having Tommy John surgery. When he returned in 2024, his stuff was intact and he zoomed to the big leagues.

If all goes well, Rosario could use Rocker's path as a model for his own rehabilitation. Given his high-end makeup, Rosario should be well-equipped for the challenges ahead.

"I was grateful for the opportunity to experience what it is to be with guys who are already at a higher level," Rosario said, about his time in big league camp this year.

If all goes well post-surgery, it won't be too long before he repeats the experience.

—JEFF WILSON

Yesavage's Progress Has Added Importance

Trey Yesavage arrived at the MLB Draft Combine last June believing a wild month was behind him.

On May 17, a dry-needle treatment inadvertently led to a partially collapsed lung that three days later forced his hospitalization. Yet 10 days after discharge, the East Carolina righthander was back on the mound dominating in regionals.

"I knew the lung really wasn't that big of a deal, at least in my mind," Yesavage said. "But at the Draft Combine, every single team asked me about it, so then I was like, 'Is this a problem or not?' "

Not for the Blue Jays, who selected the 21-year-old with the 20th overall pick, adding him to a system where he's now one of the top pitching prospects.

Even though he's yet to make his pro debut—the Blue Jays had him throw a few side sessions after he signed but then shut him down after 93.1 college innings—he just missed making the Top 100 Prospects.

The only Blue Jay to make the cut was lefthander **Ricky Tiedemann**, but he is expected to miss most—if not all—this season recovering from Tommy John surgery.

With six other pitching prospects—including 2022 first-rounder **Brandon Barriera**—also having their elbows rebuilt last year, Yesavage's progress is all the more important for the club.

His mature repertoire and solid physical base give him a chance to move fast, but he's smart enough to know not to skip steps.

"I see a process in this," Yesavage said. "The coaching and support staff, they're all professionals, as am I. They've done this longer than I have, so whatever they have in mind for me, I'll trust them."

—SHI DAVIDI

MIKE JANES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (MOORE), BRIAN WESTERHOLT/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (GILL HILL)

National League

ORGANIZATIO REPORTS

PAGE 69 The Reds helped Chase Petty build up to a career-high workload in 2024 as he prepares for a likely role in Cincinnati at some point this season.

Andrew Painter's stuff can land him in Philly on Opening Day, but the Phillies want to take it slow with their prized prospect. **PAGE 71**

DANNY PARKER/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (PETTY), BILL MITCHELL (PAINTER), TOM DIPACE (BALDWIN)

D-backs Weigh Options For Lawlar's Path

The D-backs' **Jordan Lawlar** entered spring training without a clear path to a big league job but with the expectation that he will force his way into a permanent role at some point this year.

There is a reason that might sound familiar. Lawlar came into camp in the same position last year.

Things did not go as planned.

Lawlar needed surgery on his thumb late in spring training. Shortly after returning, he strained his hamstring. And just as he was nearing a return from that injury, he injured the hamstring again.

All told, Lawlar played in just 25 games in 2024, accumulating just 104 plate appearances, none of them in the majors.

Nothing much has changed. Evaluators see a player with a chance to hit and a chance for at least average power. They see a solid defender at shortstop with the athleticism to play anywhere on the field. They see a plus runner with excellent instincts on the bases.

They just haven't seen him often enough.

"He's just got to stay healthy," D-backs assistant GM **Amiel Sawdaye** said. "I think he's going to be a really good player if he stays healthy."

Lawlar played in the Dominican Republic after last season to make up for some lost at-bats. More than likely, he will start this year at Triple-A Reno.

Last season, Lawlar played third base in addition to shortstop. If necessary, the club might get even more creative. If Lawlar has no route to big league at-bats on the infield, some have speculated internally about getting him reps in the outfield, as well.

But the D-backs aren't getting ahead of themselves.

"He's knocking on the door of the big leagues," Sawdaye said. "He doesn't have your typical résumé, because he hasn't had that many plate appearances. I want to see him play every day and hopefully at some point he's making us make a decision."

—NICK PIECORO

Baldwin Readies For Probable MLB Debut

The Braves have every reason to be giddy about 24-year-old catcher **Drake Baldwin**.

A breakout 2024 campaign at Double-A Mississippi and Triple-A Gwinnett elevated him to the top of the Braves' prospect ranks.

Braves catcher Drake Baldwin has improved incrementally each season since being drafted. Next stop: Atlanta.

He hit .276/.370/.423 with 16 home runs in 124 games and then kept raking in the Arizona Fall League.

A multi-sport star in high school, Baldwin has steadily improved since the Braves drafted him in the third round in 2022 out of Missouri State.

His power development has been particularly encouraging, so it's appropriate that the lefthanded hitter launched a resounding 411-foot home run to the opposite field at the 2024 Futures Game.

After shining at Triple-A and in the AFL, Baldwin should make his MLB debut this season.

Baldwin has made strides as a game-caller and as an overall defender, and that remains paramount if he aspires to become an impact regular. He's already revered for his bat and could provide 20-plus homers annually.

"I want to say (the power) has always been there," Baldwin said, adding his confidence has blossomed as he's seen consistent results.

Baldwin has credited former Braves catching coach **Sal Fasano** and veteran backstop **Travis d'Arnaud**, now both with the Angels, for helping accelerate his learning curve.

"I think I've grown hugely as a catcher," Baldwin said in July. "The coaches, from Sal Fasano to all the catching coaches at the lower levels, are incredible. They all have the same ideas, general constructs and have different ways of saying it. A lot of them have just clicked with me and that's made me improve a ton.

"Sal says, 'Iron sharpens iron.' So he wants Travis and **Sean** (**Murphy**) to help me as much as they can, and they were incredible in spring training. Just giving me little tips here and there, telling me what they feel, pitch calling."

Now, d'Arnaud's departure opens the door for Baldwin to pick up big league reps as Murphy's backup later this season.

—GABE BURNS

Horton Learns From Adversity

Cade Horton's first taste of Triple-A didn't go the way he or the Cubs envisioned.

The 23-year-old righthander was limited to just five starts and a 7.50 ERA for Iowa last year, earning the promotion to the cusp of the major leagues following a dominant four starts to begin the 2024 campaign at Double-A Tennessee.

However, Horton did not pitch after May 29 because of a right shoulder strain and then experienced a setback with the injury in early August to end his season.

"It's tough because I'm always the guy who's wanting to go until I break," Horton said. "And so just having those people around me to be like, 'No, let's do the smart thing. You have a whole career ahead of you.'

"So that's what I've really learned—you should say something and get right, because it's hard to go out there and pitch if you aren't feeling good."

Horton believes he learned more through the experience with his shoulder injury than he would have been on the mound for the entirety of last season.

"Adversity can be good because you learn about yourself and learn who you are through those experiences," Horton said. "Sometimes getting hurt and doing these things, I can learn more about myself that's going to take me further than if I wouldn't have faced this adversity."

Horton has a chance to help the Cubs' pitching staff at some point in 2025 if he can stay healthy, either through a spot start this summer or as a weapon out of the bullpen, something the organization has shown a willingness to do with young pitchers.

"I'm just wanting to find a seat on the plane and help my team win," Horton said. "My job at the end of the day is to go out there and get outs, whether that be in the bullpen, whether that be starting. It really doesn't matter to me."

—MEGHAN MONTEMURRO

Petty Gears Up For MLB Debut In 2025

Righthander **Chase Petty** allowed just 13 earned runs all season in 2023. The only issue was that he pitched just 68 innings over 18 starts.

While Petty's ERA climbed to 4.20 last season, he logged a career-high 137 innings, primarily with Double-A Chattanooga.

Even better: after allowing 17 earned runs in 16 April innings, Petty turned things around and had a 3.50 ERA in his final 24 starts, the last two for Triple-A Louisville.

Petty's frustration was evident at times in 2023, according to Reds senior director of player development **Jeremy Farrell**.

"We kind of had the gloves on (in 2023)," he said, "and even at the beginning of last year—where the end goal was to help put him in a position to have him take the ball each week and make all of his starts—you saw that he was able to stay healthy.

Mission accomplished. Petty completed seven innings in four of his final five Double-A starts.

It wasn't just the added workload that was a step forward for Petty, who will pitch this season at age 22. He began to throw more four-seam fastballs than he had in the past, which resulted in an uptick in velocity. He also added in a cutter to go along with his slider and changeup.

After reaching Triple-A at the end of 2024, Petty is closing in on the big leagues. Cincinnati has depth in its rotation, which could allow them to give the young righty time to continue his development.

"He's pitched his way into the conversation to be legitimate major league depth at this point," Farrell said. "Sometimes you forget that he's (so young), and that's a credit to him and the steps he's taken over the last few years."

—DOUG GRAY

Carrigg Lets Athleticism Shine

Cole Carrigg came into pro ball possessing an unusual up-the-middle skill set, having played catcher, shortstop and center field.

After the Rockies drafted him 65th overall in 2023 as a supplemental second round selection out of San Diego State, Carrigg quickly showed that his long-term future was not at catcher.

His skills were raw compared with college catchers beginning their pro careers. And Carrigg's athleticism argued against the role.

"We knew how good he was, especially in the outfield, and he could play short," Rockies assistant farm director **Jesse Stender** said. "It was almost: We're not in a position where we need this guy to be a catcher, so let's not beat him up, and let's make sure that he's working on shortstop, working in the outfield."

Catching ended for Carrigg in spring training last year before going to High-A Spokane, where he made 13 starts at shortstop and 94 in center field.

Projected to be the everyday center fielder this season at Double-A Hartford, Carrigg will still play shortstop about once a week. He has quickness and arm strength but gets to balls more because of his athleticism than his feel.

Carrigg turns 23 during the season. He is a plus runner with a double-plus arm. Those tools have more impact in center field.

"Let the athleticism play," Stender said. "He's natural out there. He covers ground. He can change games with his arm. Nobody wants to run on him."

The switch-hitting Carrigg hit .280/.358/.475 with 16 homers and 51 steals in 111 games for Spokane. His homer in the penultimate game broke a tie for the league lead with teammate **Kyle Karros** and cost Karros the Northwest League triple crown.

"He's natural from both sides (of the plate)," Stender said. "It doesn't look stiff. It doesn't look forced."

—JACK ETKIN

The Dodgers' Alex Freeland has room for improvement in terms of his overall consistency after a breakout 2024 season.

Freeland Develops At His Own Rate

Two years after being drafted in the third round, shortstop **Alex Freeland** shined in a breakout 2024 season—but his performance was not without blemishes.

The switch-hitting Freeland began the year at High-A Great Lakes and finished it with 39 games at Triple-A Oklahoma City. He spent most of his time at Double-A Tulsa.

Overall, the 23-year-old Freeland hit .260/.387/.442 with 18 home runs and 31 stolen bases in 136 games. Just five minor league batters drew more than his 91 walks

"There's the switch-hit ability," Dodgers GM **Brandon Gomes** said of Freeland. "It's a really strong work ethic, a baseball rat. The instincts and IQ are really high level. Putting all those things together really saw him take off last year.

"He's a great match with our (player development) department."

Freeland's season made him a Top 100 Prospect, but it was a season that still left room for improvement.

Freeland did his best work at High-A early in the season. He hit just .219 in June, July and August. Leveling off those peaks and valleys will be a challenge in 2025.

"He was amazing early on and kind of flattened out a little bit in the second half," Gomes said. "So I think it's taking what he learned last year, taking that into Triple-A again this year and continuing to learn how to navigate a full season, which is naturally a challenge for everybody."

Like most switch-hitters, Freeland is far more dangerous batting lefthanded.

Born with a clubfoot, Freeland had several surgeries as a child to correct the problem. It could still be affecting him as a righthanded batter, where his strikeout rate ballooned to 30%.

Hitting exclusively from the left side is something that could be considered, Gomes said, because of that elevated strikeout rate from the right side.

"The good thing is we don't have to rush him," Gomes said. "We can let him mature at his own rate."

—BILL PLUNKETT

Slick-Fielding Caba Offers 'Electric' Tools

The Marlins traded for Dominican shortstop **Starlyn Caba** in December, but the 19-year-old already knows which Miami player he wants to emulate:

Righthander **Eury Perez**, who made his big league debut at age 20.

"If it were up to me, I'd be (in the majors) right now," Caba said in a Spanish-language interview with Baseball America.

"I'd like to get there in one or two years."

Don't bet against Caba, a switch-hitter who was acquired in the trade that sent veteran lefthander **Jesus Luzardo** to the Phillies.

Caba receives double-plus grades as a fielder due to his soft hands, excellent range and smooth footwork at shortstop. He also grades as a plus runner with an above-average arm.

Philadelphia signed Caba out of the Dominican Republic for $3 million in 2023.

He has a contact-oriented hitting approach and batted .254/.427/.335 with two home runs and 37 stolen bases in 52 games in the Rookie-level Florida Complex League last season. He finished with 26 games for Low-A Clearwater as one of the Florida State League's youngest players.

Caba has rare plate discipline for a teenage hitter. He drew 67 walks against 49 strikeouts in 78 total games last season.

Caba doesn't hit for much power, but he is so young that he still might grow into his strength. Listed at 5-foot-9 and 160 pounds, Caba said he's now 5-foot-10 and 180.

Caba said the Phillies had him adjust his batting stance at midseason last year. In order to tap into more power, he went from a crouch to standing tall in his stance.

"It was hard to make the adjustment," Caba said, "but I'm now more comfortable with the change."

Caba, who has worked in the gym this winter on his explosiveness, said he plans on being a bit more aggressive at the plate in 2025.

But the best thing about being traded to the Marlins, Caba said, is that he grew up as a fan of the team.

"I think the fans will like me because I'm fast. I'm electric," Caba said. "But I won't believe I'm a Marlin until I put on the cap and uniform."

—WALTER VILLA

Quero Seeks Comeback After Lost Year

Catcher **Jeferson Quero** would have made his major league debut for the Brewers in 2024 had he not suffered a right shoulder injury on a head-first dive back into first base following his first at-bat of the year with Triple-A Nashville.

Extensive surgery to repair a torn labrum followed. The procedure sidelined Quero for the entirety of his age-21 season.

"You're hoping that it's just kind of a minor subluxation of the shoulder. And then all of a sudden, you hear the severity of the injury and you're just crushed," Brewers assistant farm director **Brenton Del Chiaro** said.

Fortunately for all involved, one of the traits that helped Quero become one of the top catching prospects in baseball was his competitiveness. And that's what helped Quero through the rehab process that he was familiar with, having had labrum surgery on his left shoulder in 2021.

Quero is well positioned as a member of the 40-man roster to make his MLB debut during the season.

Quero was awarded the Rawlings minor league Gold Glove in 2023, with his throwing arm arguably his best tool.

"I think the No. 1 thing in terms of trusting anything after an injury is time and preparation," Brewers vice president of player development **Cam Castro** said. "You've given this thing adequate time, and you prepared for this moment and are relying on those two things.

"We didn't rush through the calendar. We did this thing responsibly."

Quero hit a career-high 16 homers in 90 games for Double-A Biloxi in 2023, and the organization believes there is more power to go along with solid bat-to-ball skills for someone who looks like an impact catcher.

—*TODD ROSIAK*

Baez Gets On Track With Adjustment

First impressions can be long lasting.

Such was the case with shortstop **Jesus Baez**, who hit five home runs in his first 14 professional games as a 17-year-old in the Dominican Summer League in 2022.

So even when Baez scuffled through the rest of the DSL season and then again in the Florida Complex League in 2023, when he hit .210 with two home runs in 40 games, he remained one of the Mets' brightest lower-level prospects.

The reason was simple: Even as his surface production lacked oomph, his batted-ball data offered promise.

So Baez spent the offseason focused on improving the consistency of his swing plane, aiming to be more direct to the ball. What followed was a breakthrough season.

Baez batted .262/.338/.444 with 10 homers and eight steals in 64 games for Low-A St. Lucie. The 19-year-old's .782 OPS ranked fourth best among teenagers in the notoriously pitcher-friendly Florida State League.

"If you drill down on the things that make a future big leaguer," Mets farm director **Andrew Christie** said, "you see that he hits the ball hard, he's really young and he makes a lot of contact."

Baez hit a ball nearly 111 mph in 2024. His zone-contact rate of 83% was good for a young hitter with power. He hits velocity and offspeed effectively, though like many young hitters he can be enticed to expand his zone against quality breaking pitches.

Drafted seventh overall last year, JJ Wetherholt has his sights set on making a quick MLB debut with the Cardinals.

All these factors led the Mets to promote Baez to High-A Brooklyn in late June, making him one of just 38 teen hitters to take even one at-bat at the level. He hit well in eight games before his season came to an end when he tore the meniscus in his right knee on July 3 and had season-ending surgery.

The 5-foot-10 Baez signed out of the Dominican Republic as a shortstop, but most see him settling at another position.

"He's a no-doubt infielder. He's totally willing to play second base and third base in addition to shortstop, to work on his craft at other positions," Christie said. "He's got MLB-quality tools defensively.

"His hands and arm are special. He's not a one-trick pony. This guy can pick it."

—*MATT EDDY*

Phillies Stress Patience Painter

The Phillies don't mind waiting a bit longer for **Andrew Painter's** debut.

The righthander's arrival in the major leagues has been highly anticipated ever since the Phillies drafted him 13th overall in 2021. Painter was in competition for a spot in the Phillies' rotation during 2023 spring training, when he was just 19 years old.

But after one Grapefruit League start that year, Painter felt soreness in his elbow. He had Tommy John surgery in July, and missed the entire 2023 and 2024 seasons.

Painter made his return to a competitive mound last October in the Arizona Fall League, but the Phillies are still being patient. President of baseball operations **Dave Dombrowski** said in December that he expects to see Painter in the big leagues sometime in "July-ish."

The 22-year-old Painter was a non-roster invitee to big league spring training and was expected to throw at the Phillies' facility in Clearwater, Fla., but he was not expected to appear in game action. The Phillies have constructed a plan to save his innings.

"Andrew understands the plan. We think it's a good plan," Dombrowski said in December. "He'll build up at some point through the minors."

There are plenty of reasons to be excited for that plan to unfold after nearly two years away from competitive baseball. Painter made six AFL starts, posting a 2.30 ERA across 15.2 innings. His four-seam fastball touched 100 mph.

Rounding out Painter's arsenal in Arizona was a curveball, changeup and a new-look slider. Before his injury, he threw a sweeper, which he dropped in favor of a harder offering that tunnels better with his fastball.

The mix proved effective: Painter recorded 18 strikeouts and held opposing hitters to a .189 average. He was honored as the AFL's pitcher of the year, a solid first accolade for his return to action.

—*LOCHLAHN MARCH*

Pirates View Griffin As Playmaker And Leader

With the emergence of Rookie of the Year **Paul Skenes** in Pittsburgh, it's only natural for the Pirates to feel pressure to win now.

For that reason, the club could have looked for the quick, immediate impact of a college hitter when it chose ninth overall in the 2024 draft.

Instead, the Pirates opted for the High School Player of the Year: shortstop **Konnor Griffin** out of Jackson Prep in Mississippi.

"It wasn't necessarily about the prep versus college (angle) as much as it was about getting, in our minds, the best player available where we selected," Pirates scouting director **Justin Horowitz** said. "When we got to that point, we truly believed Konnor was that guy.

"His collection of athleticism, tools, traits and makeup—we felt it was pretty unique, not just in the draft itself, but over time as well."

Nobody denies Griffin's tools. He has arguably the highest upside of anyone in the 2024 draft. He hit .559/.690/.996 with nine home runs and 85 stolen bases. He also served as ace of the Jackson pitching staff.

Some saw him as a two-way prospect with 30-30 potential at the plate and the ability to play shortstop or center field.

It went further than that for Horowitz, who believes Griffin also has the intangibles that can't be measured on the field.

"He's someone we really wanted to bet on, a kid who has a chance to be a dynamic playmaker in every facet of the game," Horowitz said, "but then also he has the human traits to be an organizational leader, face of the franchise type of kid."

—*ANTHONY MURPHY*

Wetherholt Strives To Speed To MLB

Once the fans gathered at the fence had his attention and he was quickly at work signing his first autographs of his first big league camp, **JJ Wetherholt** fielded the question that will find him many more times in the coming months.

When will they see him in the big leagues?

"You mean this year?" the 22-year-old shortstop said with a smile and a head shake.

Less than a year removed from his final college season at West Virginia, Wetherholt arrived at camp at a time when the Cardinals are focusing on clearing way for

EDDIE KELLY (FREELAND), MIKE JANES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES (WETHERHOLT)

the future. Like his, for example.

Drafted seventh overall in 2025, Wetherholt stormed into pro ball when he joined Low-A Palm Beach in its championship run. He hit .295/.405/.400 in 29 games and flashed the tools that made him one of the top college hitters available in the draft.

"He's just an exciting player," Cardinals president of baseball operations **John Mozeliak** said. "You can tell he's a focused guy."

Wetherholt is a brand ambassador for Pison, a biotech company launching baseball-related tech that helps measure reaction time and improve decision-making speed. Nearly a full year removed from the hamstring injury that limited his junior season to 36 games, he wants to bring stolen bases back to his game.

And that same health, he hopes, will give him a chance to show his improvements at shortstop.

One of his goals this year is to developing into a "true shortstop, not just a guy who is playing shortstop."

The Cardinals remain open to Wetherholt advancing at shortstop, second base or third, and he could see time at all three. His bat will carry him, and that's where the question gains some immediacy. He's expected to move swiftly toward Double-A.

From there, St. Louis is on the horizon.

—DERRICK GOOLD

De Vries Impresses Padres With Maturity

It will be hard for **Leodalis De Vries** to top his first calendar year as a professional, but the Padres will certainly give him the opportunity.

The 18-year-old switch-hitting shortstop headlined the organization's list of non-roster invitees to big league spring training.

De Vries attending big league camp—as **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, **Jackson Merrill** and **Ethan Salas** did as teenagers coming off breakout minor league seasons—is about getting him comfortable in the environment and furthering his baseball education.

"When you look at everything he went through from signing on Jan. 15, 2024," Padres assistant farm director **Mike Daly** said, "there were a number of positives from Leo and definitely a lot of learning for him. Certainly the organization is really proud of how he handled everything and how he performed.

"He grew a ton."

Had a lot thrown at him, too.

Precocious Padres shortstop Leodalis De Vries applied what he learned in the first half to his second-half breakout.

LARRY GOREN/FOUR SEAM IMAGES

De Vries opened 2024 at Low-A Lake Elsinore as the youngest player in the California League. He scuffled out of the gate before a power surge took root and he closed the season on a .275/.400/.563 tear with 11 homers in his last 40 games.

De Vries suffered a left shoulder injury early in the season and a right rotator cuff strain later that ended his season in mid August. In October, he participated in the Arizona Fall League.

While there weren't specific swing changes that led to De Vries' uptick, the Padres attribute the gains in his walk rate and strikeout rate to his own baseball IQ and his confidence playing against older competition.

That practice started well before the Padres signed him for $4.2 million out of the Dominican Republic last winter, and it figures to continue as De Vries heads to High-A Fort Wayne.

"Really talented and smart players," Daly said, "as they get experience and learn, they make adjustments."

—JEFF SANDERS

Giants Set Eldridge Up For Success

First baseman **Bryce Eldridge** has the size, power and maturity to become the Giants' next big thing. That can be a blessing and a curse, according to **Randy Winn**.

Winn, a switch-hitting outfielder who spent five of his 13 big league seasons with San Francisco, became the Giants' vice president for player development in November. Winn believes the Giants' 2023 first-round pick "has the body, the build . . . the makeup and just has a tremendous upside."

Still, Winn cautions against expecting too much too soon from the 6-foot-7 lefthanded hitter who turned 20 in October.

"I am very wary of how much as an industry, as a culture, we tend to crown people too early," Winn said. "I've seen a lot of guys come and go in this game, and it is very tough to live up to the hype . . .

"Do I think Bryce Eldridge is super talented? Yes. Do I think he's going to have a great career? Yes. But I'm always just very wary of saying he's the next or he's this or any of those things. I would like him to be Bryce Eldridge and come into that whenever that might be."

Eldridge hit 23 home runs with a .292/.374/.516 slash line at four full-season minor league levels last season. Winn said beyond Eldridge's power, what separates him from other hitters is "that he's shown the ability at a young age to keep his hands inside the ball and to be able to drive the ball the other way."

Buster Posey, the Giants' new president of baseball operations, can relate to Eldridge's situation. San Francisco selected the catcher from Florida State with the fifth overall pick in 2008. He had 17 at-bats as a September callup in 2009 before joining the big club for good in late May 2010.

"Buster has his own experience about being a very high pick and having huge expectations and being thrown into a big league team," said Winn, who was Posey's teammate in September 2009.

Posey's background surely will play a role in how quickly or not-so-quickly the Giants believe Eldridge will be ready to debut.

—STEVE KRONER

Susana Improves Secondary Pitches

Jarlin Susana already has a fastball that captures everyone's attention. The 21-year-old righthander also has developed a level of professionalism that helped land him his first invitation to big league spring training.

His fastball touches 103 mph and sits at or near 100, and now he also has improved command of his sinker, cut-slider and changeup.

"As a man, he grew up," Wilmington pitching coach **Mark DiFelice** said just prior to the start of spring training. "At my level, I don't hold your hand. I like to see if they have that routine already, and with him I never had to circle back."

DiFelice credited Low-A Fredericksburg pitching coach **Justin Lord** with helping Susana. The 6-foot-3 hurler adjusted his pregame preparation with 20 to 25 pitches from the bullpen mound compared with the 10 to 12 he threw previously.

"In 2024, he started out OK and then had three or four starts that didn't go his way," Lord said. "We had a pretty heart-to-heart meeting. The message was: 'The only thing keeping you out of the big leagues is consistency. It's not stuff.' "

After posting an 8.89 ERA in his first 26.1 innings with the FredNats last year, Susana turned it around.

He went five innings—the max allowed him by the Nationals—in each of his last six starts, posting a 0.60 ERA with 49 strikeouts in 30 innings. His new routine included more drills every day and a touch-and-feel bullpen of 10 to 15 pitches the day before each start.

Overall, Susana pitched to a 4.34 ERA in 103.2 innings at two Class A stops last season. He struck out 157 and walked 48 while allowing just two home runs in 24 starts.

Susana's breaking ball had a 35% chase rate in 2024. Meanwhile, he has added movement and depth to his 92 mph changeup.

The Nationals liked Susana enough to acquire him in the 2022 **Juan Soto** trade with the Padres. They're glad they did.

—LACY LUSK

In Memoriam

COMMISSIONER FAY VINCENT WAS THE LAST OF HIS KIND

Francis Thomas "Fay" Vincent's short tenure as MLB commissioner changed the position for the long term.

Vincent served as deputy commissioner to longtime friend A. Bartlett Giamatti and ascended to the role of commissioner when Giamatti died suddenly of a heart attack in September 1989.

Vincent served as commissioner until September 1992, when the owners gave him a vote of no confidence and he resigned his post. The owners were angry that Vincent had intervened during the 1990 lockout to broker a Basic Agreement that included a higher minimum salary for players but did not include revenue sharing among teams.

With Vincent's ouster, Bud Selig became acting commissioner and eventually rose to commissioner. Because Selig was an owner himself, the role of commissioner shifted to one completely beholden to the interest of the owners. No lip service was paid to acting in the "best interests of baseball," as was the responsibility of Kenesaw Mountain Landis when he was installed as baseball's first commissioner in 1920.

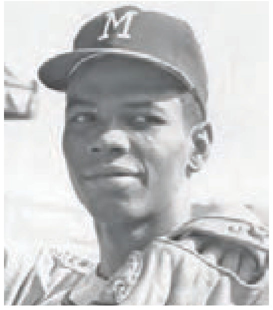
Vincent remained active in baseball post commissionership. He served as president of the New England Collegiate Baseball League, a summer wood-bat league, from 1998 to 2004.

Vincent remained vocal about baseball issues ranging from collusion, the 1994 strike and suspected steroid use in the game.

In a press release, MLB commissioner Rob Manfred credited Vincent with ensuring the 1989 World Series was completed following the Loma Prieta earthquake that rocked Northern California and also for initiating the process for the National League to add the Marlins and Rockies in 1993.

Vincent published his autobiography "The Last Commissioner: A Baseball Valentine" in 2002. He died from bladder cancer at age 86 on Feb. 1 in Vero Beach, Fla. ■

FÉLIX MANTILLA ESTABLISHED DEEP ROOTS IN MILWAUKEE



Félix Mantilla was the last living member of the 1957 World Series-champion Milwaukee Braves, and the shortstop's loyalty to the city remained rooted even after his playing career.

Born in Isabela, Puerto Rico, Mantilla took steps toward his future career as a 9-year-old, when he went from playing in police-sponsored city leagues to playing for the Puerto Rican national team that won the Amateur World Series in 1951, beating Cuba 6-5.

Mantilla also broke racial barriers throughout his career. In 1953, with the Jacksonville Braves, he and Hank Aaron were among the first players of color on the team.

Mantilla's impact went beyond the field. He faced and overcame challenges such as limited English proficiency and being one of the few non-white players in the major leagues during his time.

Mantilla's career continued with various teams, including the Mets and Red Sox, where he earned an all-star appearance in 1964. He went on to become a beloved figure in Milwaukee, working with the police department and mentoring youth after retirement.

Mantilla's legacy in the city remains. The Félix Mantilla Little League Fields in Baran Park in Milwaukee are still used today.

Mantilla was 90 when he died of prostate cancer on Jan. 10. ■

Scott Sauerbeck Stymied Lefthanded Hitters

A four-year letter winner at Miami (Ohio), lefthander Scott Sauerbeck was drafted in the 23rd round by the Mets in 1994.

The Pirates selected Sauerbeck in the 1998 Rule 5 draft, and he made his MLB debut with the 1999 club. He made 65 relief appearances as a rookie and quickly became one of Pittsburgh's most reliable bullpen pieces.

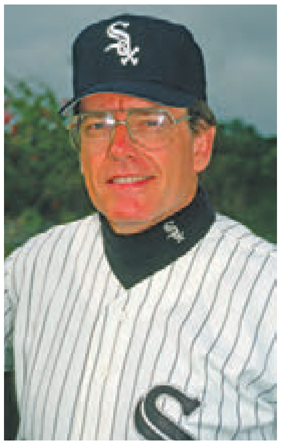
In 2002 he appeared in 78 games, setting a Pirates single-season franchise record for the most appearances by a lefthander.

Sauerbeck's big league career lasted seven seasons and included stops in Boston, Cleveland and Oakland. He had a 3.82 ERA with 389 strikeouts in 386.1 innings, serving primarily as a left-on-left matchup reliever, a role that has been phased out of the game by the three-batter rule.

Sauerbeck didn't throw especially hard, but he threw a lot of curveballs and held lefthanded batters to a career .196 average over 616 at-bats. Just 12 lefties in the Wild Card Era allowed a lower average in a career of at least 500 left-on-left at-bats.

Sauerbeck was 53 when he died of a heart attack in Bradenton, Fla., on Feb. 18.

Jeff Torborg Thrived As MLB Catcher, Manager & Broadcaster



At Rutgers, Jeff Torborg earned All-America honors, setting a single-season batting record with a .537 average in 1963.

Torborg's 10-year major league career spanned from 1964 to 1973. He served as a catcher for the Dodgers and Angels. He won a World Series with the Dodgers in 1965 and caught three no-hitters during his career: Sandy Koufax's perfect game on June 9, 1965; Bill Singer's no-hitter on July 20, 1970; and Nolan Ryan's first no-hitter on May 15, 1973.

Torborg later transitioned to managing, leading teams such as the Cleveland Indians (1977-79), White Sox (1989-91), Mets (1992-93), Montreal Expos (2001) and Marlins (2002-03). His most notable managerial achievement came in 1990, when he guided the White Sox to a 94-68 record and was named the American League Manager of the Year.

After his managing career, Torborg enjoyed a 12-year stint as a radio broadcaster for CBS and Fox, where he worked alongside Vin Scully for three World Series.

Torborg was 83 when he died on Jan. 19 in Port Orange, Fla.

Bob Veale Set A Standard For Power Southpaws

There were dominant lefthanders in the 1960s, and then there was Bob Veale.

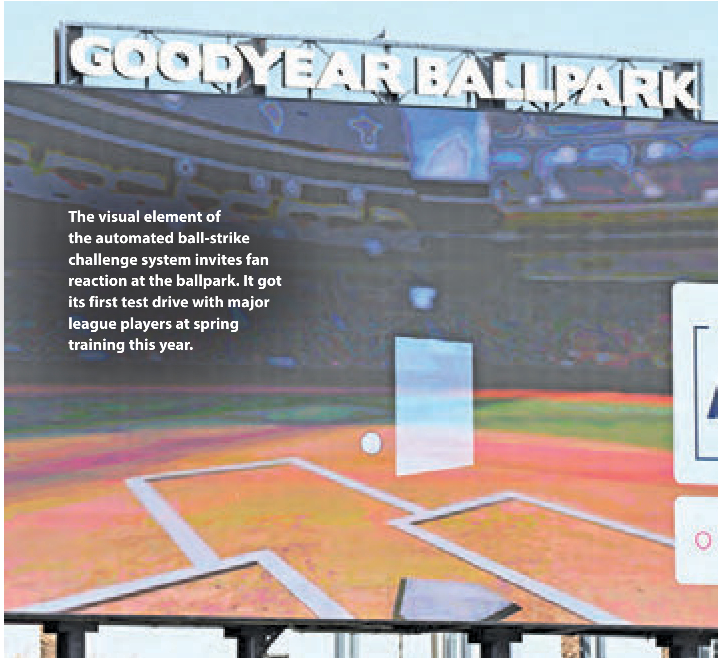
Veale cemented his place in Pirates history by striking out 276 batters in a single season, the most by any pitcher in Pittsburgh's modern era. He surpassed 200 strikeouts in both 1966 and 1969, establishing himself as one of the premier southpaws of the 1960s.

Veale still holds the Pirates' club modern era record for strikeouts in a season. Over his 13-year career, the flame-throwing southpaw racked up 120 victories and capped his legacy with a World Series title in 1971.

Veale worked as a scout and minor league pitching coach for both the Braves and the Yankees. In 2006, he was honored with induction into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

Veale died on Jan. 7 in Birmingham, Ala. He was 91. ■

JIM COMMENTUCCI/GETTY IMAGES (VINCENT), MARK RUCKER/TRANSCENDENTAL GRAPHICS/GETTY IMAGES (MANTILLA), FOCUS ON SPORT/GETTY IMAGES (TORBORG)



The visual element of the automated ball-strike challenge system invites fan reaction at the ballpark. It got its first test drive with major league players at spring training this year.

PERSPECTIVE

FOLLOWING THE RULES

MLB has tested the ABS challenge system for years, just as it did for every previous rule change

J.J. COOPER
@JJCOOP36

Spring training this year has given fans a reason to think about the strike zone in more detail than ever before.

The experimental use of the automated ball-strike challenge system has led to a lot of fans wondering why the strike zone being used by robot umpires doesn't match the one they've seen in the rule book.

This is the part of baseball that has usually bubbled beneath the surface. You might know what should be a strike and what should be a ball. But if asked to define the two, things get complicated quickly.

If you have ever used the term "hollow beneath the kneecap," you've definitely read the official MLB rule book. If you've ever given thought to where the midpoint between the top of the shoulders and the top of the uniform pants truly resides, you've likely umpired games at some point.

But as MLB has edged closer and closer to bringing the ABS challenge system to regular season games, the success of that system has depended on putting that rulebook definition back on the bookshelf.

Whenever MLB has tried to match the rulebook definition of the strike zone in its many minor league, Arizona Fall League and Atlantic League experiments, it has done nothing but frustrate batters, pitchers, umpires and fans. By being strict to the rules, the ABS zone seemed to be out of whack.

Only by being willing to be unconventional has MLB gotten to the point where the robo umps can call what we perceive as the conventional strike zone.

The strike zone is exceptionally complicated. It has moved around from era to era, but anyone who watches a lot of baseball gets acclimated to the "normal" zone pretty quickly.

Now, that version of "normal" will change.

In the 1945 MLB rule book, the strike zone was defined as being "not lower than the batsman's knees, nor higher than his shoulder." Imagine a modern day batter getting called out on a fastball at collarbone height.

By 1956, the definition in the official rule book stated that it was the space "between the batter's arm pits and the top of his knees when he assumes his natural stance." Now we have the "hollow beneath the kneecap" and the midpoint. Even when it comes to the rulebook definition, the zone has changed over the years.

In practical terms, it is always changing. There was a time when the American League and National League used different zones because of the umpires' equipment.

Until the late 1970s and early '80s, AL umpires used external balloon-style chest protectors, while NL umpires used the chest protectors of the style still used today. That meant that National League umpires called more low strikes than the American League ones. That's because AL umpires using the bigger balloon protector were restricted in their stance. They couldn't get as low or as close as NL umps.

All those ideas you may have to make the ABS strike zone more accurate? They've been tried.

When the ABS system first came to the Atlantic League in 2019, it used a three-dimensional zone. But that didn't last long, because everyone quickly realized that thinking of the zone as a 17-inch long box allows too many breaking pitches to barely nick the top, bottom or sides of the strike zone.

A back-door breaking ball clearly off the plate could curve in just enough to register as a strike. That led to pitches being called strikes that left batters fuming and fans flummoxed.

Now, the zone is a two-dimensional box set at the halfway point of the plate, measured from front to back. Other options have been considered: the KBO has experimented with using a pair of boxes, with the pitch having to touch both boxes to be considered a strike. The rectangular zone could be set at a slant instead of being perpendicular to the ground. That would account for gravity where the top of the zone is farther forward than the bottom of the zone.

But any of those ideas adds complexity to something that ideally needs to be easy for fans to understand at a glance. The prevalence of "K-zone" graphics on MLB broadcasts has already conditioned fans to think of the strike zone as a two-dimensional rectangle. And multiple experiments that MLB has done over the past six years have found that this simple approach seems to better replicate the expected strike zone for players and umpires.

When MLB and the Atlantic League first experimented with an ABS zone in 2019, it used a faithful rulebook definition of the strike zone. Hitters went crazy after getting called on high pitches that they had never seen called as strikes. Within a week, the zone was moved down a few inches, because that textbook definition wasn't what any umpire called.

Basing the height of the strike zone off of a live representation of the hitter's stance at the start of the pitch? That was tried in Triple-A. Surveys of players found that they preferred the zone based off a player's height. The testing found that umpires don't adjust their zones significantly for batting stances.

Early on, MLB tried tweaking the zone to try to create more action and reduce strikeouts. Despite multiple iterations—such as making the zone wider and shorter, reducing some of the top of the zone for fewer high-fastball strikeouts—nothing really worked. Most led to more walks, more controversial calls and fewer balls in play.

Eventually, the league realized that the best goal was to try to make the automated zone that faded into the background. Ideally, hitters, pitchers and fans should see calls by the ABS as "normal."

Several weeks into the spring training experiment, the ABS challenge system was largely unnoticeable. This has been MLB's way with major rules changes in recent years.

Over the past five years, multiple significant rules changes have been adopted, including pitch clocks, bigger bases, shift limits and limits on pickoff throws. In all cases, the bugs have been cleared up well before the changes arrive in the majors.

We're seeing the next tests start to bubble up as well—automated systems to rule on checked swings were tested last October in the Arizona Fall League.

The potential arrival of the ABS challenge system in the major leagues for 2026 is the likely next big step. At this point, the bugs have been squashed. There still has to be a decision on whether to bring it to the major leagues, but the tech is ready.

If it arrives, it will lead to a slightly different understanding of the strike zone. But that's a never-ending part of baseball. ■

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